BIBLE DOCTRINES

FOR Today

BOOK 1

BIBLE DOCTRINES
for Today

by
Michael C. Bere, Ph. D.
and the editors of *A Beka Book*

A Beka Book
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BOOK 1

Bibliology: The Doctrine of the Bible
Theology: The Doctrine of God
Christology: The Doctrine of Christ
Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

BOOK 2

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Man
Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation
Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church
Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels
Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things

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BOOK 1

Contents

Introduction

1. Why Study Bible Doctrines?.....1

Chapter 1
Bibliology: The Doctrine of the Bible

2. Who Wrote the Bible?.....9
3. How Did God Write the Bible?.....18
4. The Proofs of Inspiration.....29
5. The Proofs of Inspiration (continued).....44
6. The Proofs of Inspiration (continued).....50
7. The Canonicity of the Bible.....57
8. The Canonicity of the Bible (continued).....65
9. The Study and Interpretation of the Bible.....78

Pictorial Insert: The Preservation of God's Word.....91

Chapter 2
Theology: The Doctrine of God

10. The Existence of God.....99
11. How God Reveals Himself.....112
12. The Attributes of God.....122
13. The Nature and Names of God.....134
14. God's Acts of Creation.....141
15. The Six Days of Creation.....149
16. God: His Sovereignty.....159

Chapter 3
Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

17. The Names and Nature of Jesus Christ.....167
18. The Significance of Christ's Supernatural Life.....178
19. The Humiliation of Jesus Christ.....184
20. The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ.....192
21. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ.....204
22. The Exaltation of Jesus Christ.....216

Chapter 4
Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

23. The Third Person of the Trinity.....223
24. The Holy Spirit's Past and Present Work.....230
25. The Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit.....237
26. The Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.....245

Index.....249

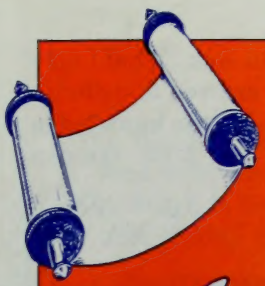
Verses to Memorize

Verses	Corresponding Doctrine
Rom. 10:9–13	Soteriology
2 Tim. 3:16–17	Bibliology
Ps. 119:89; Isa 40:8	Bibliology
2 Pet. 1:20–21	Bibliology
Books of the Bible	Bibliology
Ps. 100 (former students)	Theology
Isa. 55:8–11	Theology
1 Chron. 29:11–13	Theology
Ps. 90:1–2	Theology
Ps. 139:1, 2, 6, 7	Theology
Isa. 40:28–31	Theology
Phil. 2:5–8	Christology
Col. 1:16–17; 2:9–10	Christology
Isa. 53:1–3	Christology
Isa. 53:4–6	Christology
Eph. 5:17–19	Pneumatology

UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos

Today man sees all his hopes and aspirations crumbling before him. He is perplexed and knows not whither he is drifting. But he must realize that the Bible is his refuge, and the rallying point for all humanity. It is here man will find the solution of his present difficulties and guidance for his future action, and unless he accepts with clear conscience the Bible and its great message, he cannot hope for salvation. For my part, I glory in the Bible.

—**Haile Selassie I** (1891–1975)
Emperor of Ethiopia



Introduction

LESSON 1

Why Study Bible Doctrines?

Doctrine means "teaching." The doctrines of the Bible are God's teachings or lessons for mankind. Bible doctrines are the teachings found in God's Word that reveal God, the Creator of all things, and His relationship to His creation. The study of Bible doctrines is the attempt to organize the different aspects of God's revelation into component parts (e.g., God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, salvation, the church, etc.).

A. It is important that we know Bible doctrines because God wrote the Bible.

1. God is the **Author** of the Bible.

> "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." *2 Tim. 3:16*

The Bible is the only book on earth written by God. We have the guarantee that "the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8).

The Bible consists of two sections: the **Old Testament,** consisting of **39 books,** and the **New Testament,** consisting of **27 books.** Since God inspired about **40 writers** over the course of **1,500 years,** He must have felt it to be very important for mankind to have His written Word.

2. God is the **Subject** of the Bible.

Nature can give us only an incomplete picture of God. It is only through God's Word that we can understand God's character. When people say, "I just can't believe in a God who would. . . ," they are showing their ignorance of God's character. They most likely are not able students of God's Word.

Paul's inspired prayer in Philippians 3:10 was, "That I may **know** him." Simon Peter knew that the answer to difficult problems comes by growing "in grace, and in the **knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). We can only **know** God through His Word.

B. God says it is very important that we know Biblical doctrines.

In Paul's final two epistles God continually emphasizes the importance of the study of God's Word. Paul wanted Timothy to understand that because "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" it is all, therefore, "profitable for doctrine" (2 Tim. 3:16).

"But **continue** thou in the things which thou hast learned . . . the holy scriptures." *2 Tim. 3:14–15*

"**Study** to shew thyself approved unto God." *2 Tim. 2:15*

"**Meditate** upon these things; **give thyself wholly** to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." *1 Tim. 4:15*

"Till I come, **give attendance** to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." *1 Tim. 4:13*

"**Take heed** unto thyself, and unto the doctrine." *1 Tim. 4:16*

Notice the imperative verbs in the verses above. God has clearly commanded us to study His Word "that the man of God may be perfect [mature], throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17). **The study of the Word of God is not optional for the Christian.**

The Bible indicates that a Christian shows his love for God by keeping His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:10, 14; 1 John 5:2–3; and 2 John 6). In Old Testament times the terms "love" and "obedience" were so closely related as to be indistinguishable. A king might say, "This servant **loves** me" when that servant had obeyed the king's command. Does not our Eternal King deserve that same love? One cannot say, "I love God," and refuse to keep His commandments. Nor can one say, "I love God," and refuse to study His precious Word.

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." *Jer. 15:16*

There is a strong connection between loving God and reading His Word. The Christian can daily show his love for God by obeying God's command to study His Word.

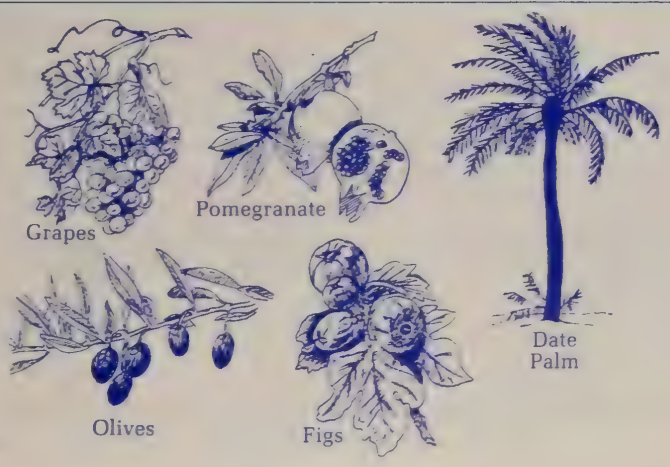
Thy Word Is Like a Garden, Lord

Thy Word is like a garden, Lord, With flowers bright and fair;
And ev'ryone who seeks may pluck A lovely cluster there.
Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine, And jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths For ev'ry searcher there.

Thy Word is like a starry host—A thousand rays of light
Are seen to guide the traveler, And make his pathway bright.
Thy Word is like an armory Where soldiers may repair
And find, for life's long battleday, All needful weapons there.

O may I love Thy precious Word, May I explore the mine;
May I its fragrant flowers glean, May light upon me shine.
O may I find my armor there, Thy Word my trusty sword!
I'll learn to fight with ev'ry foe The battle of the Lord!

—Edwin Hodder



A Biblical Garden

"For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land . . . A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey."
Deut. 8:7–8

Here is a listing of the "seven species with which God had blessed the promised land abundantly. The grapevine and the olive tree, source of the "wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine" (Ps. 104:15), became national emblems of the blessing of God upon Israel in its land. The fig tree and the date palm yielded fruits high in sugar content ("honey") that formed a daily staple in the diet of God's people. The pomegranate was cultivated as a fruit, and parts of it were used medicinally, in the making of ink, and in tanning hides.

C. Bible Doctrines clarify for us what we believe and why. (1 Pet. 3:15)

As a young person grows up, it is right for him to obey his authorities without question. This is one of the marks of outstanding Bible characters. Abraham "obeyed; and he went out" of Ur of the Chaldees, "**not knowing** whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). But there must also come a time when we are able to "give a reason" for what we believe. It is not enough to say, "My teacher [pastor, parent, etc.] believes that, but I don't know why." **It is important to be able to give a reason for what one believes.**

A good balance is illustrated by Simon Peter. Although Christ's request to let down the net seemed irrational, Peter replied, "Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing, nevertheless, **at thy word** I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). We must know His Word before we can fully understand His Ways.

D. It is important that we know what *not* to believe. (1 John 4:1–6)

One of the great dangers of our day is the rise of hundreds of cults. Many of these cults base some of their teaching on a few selected verses from the Word of God. If a Christian is not well-founded on the doctrines of the Bible, he is easy prey for false teaching. Could you explain why you believe the Bible does not teach that someday we will become gods? Could you Scripturally prove that Jesus Christ is God, not just "a god?" Do you believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth one day? A study of the key doctrines of the Bible will help you discern between "the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

E. It is important that we know how to tell someone else about our faith in Christ. (1 Tim. 4:15)

One of the "good works" of 2 Timothy 3:17 is effectively telling others what Christ has done for you in salvation. The more you witness, the more you realize how important it is to know your Bible. It is embarrassing not to know where to find important verses. Yet if you study His Word, you will be a "workman who **needeth not** to be ashamed, **rightly** dividing the word of truth."

It is the Bible, not arguments, that God honors in our efforts at leading people to Christ. God's promise is that His "word . . . shall not return unto [Him] void, but it shall accomplish that which [He pleases], and it shall prosper in the thing whereto [He] sent it" (Isa. 55:11).

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." *Heb. 4:12*

F. It is important that we appreciate our spiritual blessings.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God." *1 Cor. 2:12*

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." *Eph. 1:18*

Many Christians do not fully appreciate all that God has done for them because they fail to read His Word. They live defeated lives because they have never learned all that they have in Christ. They are like the woman who wallpapered a room with retirement checks because she never bothered to read what was written on the face of that monthly piece of mail. Paul tells us to study the Bible so we will know "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Date Palm

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree . . . they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." *Ps. 92:12, 14*

The palm tree of the Bible is the date palm, treasured not only for its fruit but also as a source of material for building fences, making rope, and weaving matting, baskets, and bags. The date palm is a fitting symbol for senior saints since it lives and continues to bear fruit for over one hundred years.

Bible Doctrines Can Be Divided into 9 Categories.

I. **Bibliology:** The Doctrine of the Bible
   - A. Revelation and Inspiration
   - B. Authenticity of the Scriptures
   - C. Credibility of the Scriptures
   - D. Canonicity of the Scriptures

II. **Theology:** The Doctrine of God
   - A. The Being and Attributes of God
   - B. The Arguments for His Existence
   - C. His Trinitarian Existence
   - D. His Works of Creation and Providence

III. **Christology:** The Doctrine of Christ
   - A. Christ's Theanthropic Person (fully God, fully man)
   - B. His Deity
   - C. His Humanity
   - D. The Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ
   - E. Historical Views of the Person of Christ

IV. **Pneumatology:** The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
   - A. His Divine Personality
   - B. His Work in Salvation

V. **Anthropology:** The Doctrine of Man
   - A. Anthropology Proper
     1. Origin and Nature of Man
     2. His Primitive State
     3. His Probation and Fall
     4. Actual Transgression
     5. Free Gift of Righteousness or Grace
   - B. Hamartiology or the Doctrine of Sin
     1. Original Sin
     2. Effects of Original Sin
     3. Nature and Character of Guilt and Penalty

VI. **Soteriology:** The Doctrine of Salvation

- A. Objective Soteriology, or the work of Christ in atoning for sin
  1. Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King
  2. Vicarious Atonement
  3. Various Theories of the Atonement
- B. Subjective Soteriology, or the Application of the Work of Christ to the individual by the Holy Spirit
  1. Vocation or Call
  2. Repentance and Saving Faith
  3. Justification and Regeneration
  4. Sanctification

VII. **Ecclesiology:** The Doctrine of the Church

- A. The Idea or Nature of the Church
- B. The Organization of the Church
- C. The Ordinances of the Church
- D. The Mission of the Church

VIII. **Angelology:** The Doctrine of Angels

- A. Reality, Personality, and Classification of Angels
- B. Reality, Origin, Fall, and Methodology of Satan
- C. Reality, Origin, and Methodology of Demons

IX. **Eschatology:** The Doctrine of Last Things

- A. The Intermediate and Final State
- B. Second Advent of Christ
- C. The Resurrections
- D. The Final Judgment

Yet It Lives

Generation follows generation—yet it lives.
Nations rise and fall—yet it lives.
Kings, dictators, presidents come and go—yet it lives.
Hated, despised, cursed—yet it lives.
Doubted, suspected, criticized—yet it lives.
Condemned by atheists—yet it lives.
Scoffed at by scorners—yet it lives.
Exaggerated by fanatics—yet it lives.
Misconstrued and misstated—yet it lives.
Ranted and raved about—yet it lives.
Its inspiration denied—yet it lives.

Yet it lives—as a lamp to our feet.
Yet it lives—as a light to our path.
Yet it lives—as the gate to heaven.
Yet it lives—as a standard for childhood.
Yet it lives—as a guide for youth.
Yet it lives—as an inspiration for the matured.
Yet it lives—as a comfort for the aged.
Yet it lives—as food for the hungry.
Yet it lives—as water for the thirsty.
Yet it lives—as rest for the weary.
Yet it lives—as light for the heathen.
Yet it lives—as salvation for the sinner.
Yet it lives—as grace for the Christian.

To know it is to love it.
To love it is to accept it.
To accept it means life eternal.

—Author Unknown, from *Gideon Magazine*

CHAPTER 1

Bibliology: The Doctrine of the Bible

LESSON 2

Who Wrote the Bible?

We believe in the **plenary verbal inspiration** of the Bible. This lesson will teach what is meant by that vitally important phrase and will show how the Bible is unique among books.

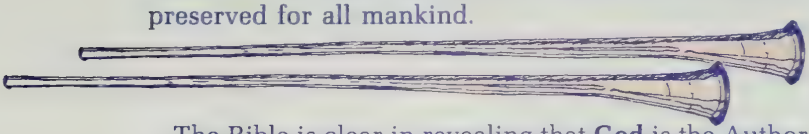
A. What is plenary verbal inspiration?

1. Inspiration: The Bible is God-breathed.

"All scripture is given by **inspiration** of God."
2 Tim. 3:16

a. What inspiration is

The word *inspiration* in 2 Timothy 3:16 is translated from a compound Greek word which means "God-breathed." Thus this verse says that "all Scripture is God-breathed." God breathed out His words over a period of about 1,500 years to approximately forty specially chosen and prepared men of God who wrote them down to give us our Scriptures, the Word of God. Just as a musician breathes into a trumpet to produce the notes he wants, so God breathed into forty chosen writers of the books of the Bible the exact words that He wanted preserved for all mankind.



The Bible is clear in revealing that **God** is the Author of the Bible:

"**The Lord gave** the word: great was the company of those that published it." *Ps. 68:11*

"All scripture is given by inspiration **of God.**"
2 Tim. 3:16

"**God . . . spake** in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." *Heb. 1:1*

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which **the Holy Ghost teacheth;** comparing spiritual things with spiritual." *1 Cor. 2:13*

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is **not after man.** For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the **revelation of Jesus Christ."** *Gal. 1:11–12*

In 2 Peter 1:16–21, Simon Peter makes an amazing claim. He refers to the Transfiguration, at which he was an eyewitness to the Lord's glory and heard God speak audibly from heaven. But he declared that the inspiration of God was **more reliable** ("a more sure word of prophecy") than actually seeing Christ's glory and hearing God's declaration "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Eyewitnesses may disagree as to exactly what was seen, and even the best of minds would find it difficult to quote someone else verbatim. **Inspiration is superior to eyewitness accounts because it is not influenced by fallible man.** There can be no doubt that **God** breathed out the words of His wonderful Message to mankind.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were **eyewitnesses of his majesty.** For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard,** when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also **a more sure word of prophecy;** whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: **but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."**
2 Pet. 1:16–21

b. What inspiration is not

As used today, the English word *inspiration* has a variety of meanings. Because of this, we may fail to get an accurate picture of the Biblical definition of *inspiration*. We sometimes use the word to refer to an athlete who is "inspired" to play above his ability because of a certain spectator in the stands. This is not what the Biblical term means, however. The ability of Handel to completely write out the score for his *Messiah* in less than one month's time is phenomenal, but it is not "inspiration" in the Bible sense. The music of Handel was not "God-breathed." The inspiration of the Bible was a **unique** act of the Holy Spirit and cannot be duplicated by man.

2. Verbal inspiration: The Words of the Bible are God-breathed.

"This [Bible] is the writing of the living God: each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; **each word** in it dropped from the everlasting lips; **each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit."** —Charles Haddon Spurgeon

The word *verbal* means "by means of words," or "word for word." As used of inspiration, it means the **very words** of the Bible were breathed out by God. It is important to understand that this is exactly the claim the Bible makes for itself. Young people, on occasion, enjoy discussing what God **could have** done. But the study of Bible doctrine is not based on hypothetical situations but on the clear revelation of God's Word. This is especially important in the study of plenary verbal inspiration. It is important to understand what God **did** do, not to conjecture as to what He **could** do. The Scripture reveals unquestionably that **God gave the exact words of Scripture.**

"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and **his word** was in my tongue." *2 Sam. 23:2*

"Which things also we speak, **not in the words which** man's wisdom teacheth, but [in the words] which the Holy Ghost teacheth." *1 Cor. 2:13*

"All **scripture** [writing] is given by inspiration of God." *2 Tim. 3:16*

"this **scripture** [writing] . . . which **the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake."** *Acts 1:16*

The word translated *scripture* (graphē) in 2 Timothy 3:16 and Acts 1:16 means the actual **writings** of God's Word. These

jot
כ י ט ח ז ו ה ד ג ב א
Kaph Yod Teth Heth Zayin Vav He Daleth Gimel Beth Aleph
ת ש ר ק צ פ ע ס נ מ ל
Tav Sin Resh Koph Tsadi Peh Ayin Samekh Nun Mem Lamed

Biblical Hebrew

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."
Matt. 5:18

Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament Scriptures is one of the world's oldest living languages. Like Arabic, Hebrew is a Semitic language, a language of the descendants of Noah's son Shem. It was the Semites who invented the alphabet, thus making possible the writing of a Book that people of all classes could read.

Much of Biblical Hebrew was the result of a journey, Abraham's journey from Ur of the Chaldees through Haran to Palestine. Along the way, Abraham encountered dozens of ancient Semitic languages and thus was able to add to his vocabulary as he traveled. He then passed on this expanded language to his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, and thus it became the language of the Jewish people. Thus as God inspired Moses and other Jews to write the Old Testament, they used many words that were transliterated directly from other Semitic languages. In this marvelous way the Biblical Hebrew language itself confirms the historicity of the Genesis account of Abraham's travels.

The Hebrew language consists of 22 consonants. Unlike the English language, Hebrew is read from right to left and from "back to front." Genesis, for example, would be found at what we would consider the "back" of the Hebrew Bible. The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is **Aleph,** and the last letter is **Tav.**

A "jot" is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Hebrew, "yod"). A "tittle" is the small appendage that differentiates two similar-looking letters in the Hebrew alphabet. In the writing of the following pairs of Hebrew consonants, the only distinguishing characteristic is the tittle.

	Hebrew Consonant	Name	Transliteration
1.	ר	Resh (rāsh)	r
2.	ד ← tittle	Daleth (dä′lĕth)	d
1.	ה	He (hā)	h
2.	tittle → ח	Heth (kāth)	k

writings can consist of nothing else than **the words** actually written down by the human writer on his manuscript. God dicated to the human writers the **actual words** that appeared on those original manuscripts, the "graphē" (writings) themselves.

God reveals that not only the **spelling** of words but also the **difference between the singular and plural form** of a word is **God-breathed.**

Spelling

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." *Matt. 5:18*

A "jot" is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and a "tittle" is the small appendage that differentiates between two similar-looking letters in the alphabet.

Singular and plural

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to **seeds,** as of many; but as of one, And to thy **seed,** which is Christ." *Gal. 3:16*

Liberals attempt to discredit the Scriptural claim of verbal inspiration by suggesting it would make the human writers of Scripture mere automatons. They want to minimize God's part and emphasize man's part by ridiculing the concept that "each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit." But how else could God breathe out the very words of Scripture than by dictating them to the human writers? The word *dictate* means "to speak so another may write down." This is exactly what God said He did to bring about His Word: "this scripture . . . which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake" (Acts 1:16). Great Bible scholars such as John Calvin, Benjamin Warfield, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Louis Gaussen, John R. Rice, Robert Preus, A. J. Gordon, and others have used the word ***dictation*** in referring to the word-for-word inspiration of the Scriptures.

"The Holy Spirit actually supplied, inspired, and **dictated** the very words and each and every term individually." **—Robert Preus**

"Each sentence was **dictated** by the Holy Spirit." **—Charles Haddon Spurgeon**

"The Law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men, but **dictated** by the Holy Spirit." —**John Calvin**

"He [Paul] wrote this [2 Tim. 3:16] by the **dictation** of the Holy Spirit." —**Abraham Calov**

Great Bible Scholars Believed in Verbal Inspiration.

"It has always been a matter of profound surprise to me that anybody should ever question the **verbal inspiration** of the Bible."
—B. H. Carroll

"Just as far as the thoughts of Scripture relating to any element or topic whatsoever are inspired, the **words** in which those thoughts are expressed must be inspired also. Every element of Scripture, whether doctrine or history, of which God has guaranteed the infallibility, must be infallible in its **verbal** expression." —Benjamin B. Warfield

"If the **words** were not wholly God's, then their teaching would not be wholly God's." —J. I. Packer

"Inspiration does not consist in mere divine guidance and protection against error, but is a divine supplying or divine giving of the **very words** that constitute Scripture." —Francis Pieper

"Let it be observed, that not the matter of the Scriptures only, but the **very words** in which they are written are of God." —John Gill

"That this inspiration should extend to the **very words** seems most natural since the purpose of inspiration is to secure an infallible record of truth. Thoughts and words are so inseparably connected that as a rule a change in words means a change in thought." —[illegible]

"Verbal inspiration is at the heart of what inspiration means. The **words** which are written in Scripture are **the words of God** himself."
—Clark H. Pinnock

"Scripture wants us to receive all its words as **words chosen by God** and therefore expressing the thought so perfectly and infallibly as only God can express it."
—Theodore Engelder

"Since the holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, they evidently wrote not their own words, but **those [words]** which God Himself put into their minds."
—John Theodore Mueller

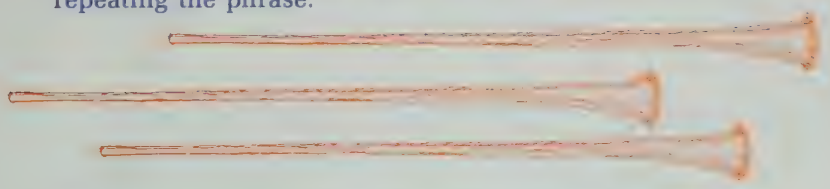
"It is safe to say that there is no doctrine . . . which has been so widely held through the ages of Church history as that of **verbal inspiration.**" —R. Laird Harris

"If the **words** godhead, election, redemption, imputation, regeneration, propitiation, sacrifice, atonement, faith, repentance, justification, sanctification, adoption, resurrection, heaven, hell, etc., were not inspired and infallible, then everything essential to Christian faith and life may be only old wives' fables. Without certainty and divine authority in the **words** of Scripture, it is patently impossible to believe in the things, or even to know the will of God, for our salvation." —M'Intosh

Liberals, and those they have influenced, have ridiculed the concept of verbal dictation, sneeringly calling it "mechanical dictation," as if the human writers became robots. A secretary never becomes a robot when she takes dictation from her boss. She remains a human being with all of her faculties and personality. Similarly, the human writers of Scripture did not become robots or mechanical men when God breathed out to them the words of the Scriptures.

> "Their intellectual faculties were at the time directed, not suspended. They knew, they felt, they willed, they recollected, they understood, they approved." —Louis Gaussen

Many great Bible scholars (Francis Pieper, R. Laird Harris, Edward J. Young, Gresham Machen, Theodore Engelder, *et al.*) who believe that God dictated the words of Scripture have pointed out very clearly that there was nothing mechanical about God's dictation of the Scriptures and that the liberal phrase **"mechanical** dictation" is misleading. "Mechanical dictation" is a phrase invented by liberals to sneer at those who believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and liberals and those influenced by them have done much damage by repeating the phrase.



3. Plenary verbal inspiration: Every word of the Bible is God-breathed.

The word ***plenary*** means "full." In referring to inspiration it means that the **"full"** Bible is inspired, or that **every** word is breathed out by God. This is the claim of the Bible for itself. The historical parts of the Bible are as accurate as the parts that explain salvation. The verses that deal with science are as infallible as the description of heaven. This is what the Bible claims and what Christians have always believed.

> "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every** word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
>
> "**Every** word of God
>
> "**All** scripture is given by inspiration of God."
> *2 Tim. 3:16*

The most important truth of all is that **plenary verbal inspiration** is the correct view of how we got our Bible, because it is **God's view.**

"All [plenary] scripture [verbal] is given by inspiration **of God** [God-breathed]." *2 Tim. 3:16*

B. How is the Bible different from any other book?

1. The Word of God is **eternal.**

By **eternal** we mean "from eternity past to eternity future." The Bible is unique because it did not originate gradually over 1,500 years. It originated in the mind of God from the beginning. Scripture clearly reveals this amazing fact.

"**For ever,** O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." *Ps. 119:89*

"Concerning thy testimonies, I have **known of old** that thou hast founded them **for ever.**" *Ps. 119:152*

"Thy word is true **from the beginning.**" *Ps. 119:160*

"But the word of the Lord **endureth for ever.**" *1 Pet. 1:25*

"[The Bible] is eternal in Heaven, which means that the entire Word of God was in Heaven before the world was ever created. The last verse in Revelation was in Heaven before the first verse in Genesis was ever given to man. This forever settles the truth of verbal inspiration."

—Jack Hyles, *Meet the Holy Spirit*, p. 12.

2. The Word of God is **the only book inspired by God.**

God has given us a Bible of **66 books** penned by **40 different human writers** over a period of **1,500 years.** This Bible is the only book on earth that is God-breathed. God has not given more Scripture since He inspired the last apostle, John, to write the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Surely if God spent this much time and effort to reveal Himself to us through His Word, we ought to make our Bible the object of our most intense study and devotion. If some have **died** for it, surely we should be willing to **live** for it.

The Book Our Mothers Read

We search the world for truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll,
And all old flower-fields of the soul;
And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from the quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read.

—John Greenleaf Whittier

My Bible

Though the cover is worn,
And the pages are torn,
And though places bear traces of tears,

Yet more precious than gold
Is the Book worn and old,
That can shatter and scatter my fears.

When I prayerfully look
In the precious old Book,
As my eyes scan the pages I see
Many tokens of love
From the Father above,
Who is nearest and dearest to me.

This old Book is my guide,
'Tis a friend by my side,
It will lighten and brighten my way;
And each promise I find
Soothes and gladdens my mind
As I read it and heed it today.

—Author Unknown

LESSON 3

How Did God Write the Bible?

A. The Scriptural view of inspiration

1. God **set apart** a special group of men to write His Word.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but **holy men** of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." *2 Pet. 1:21*

God would not trust His holy Word to unregenerate men. The word ***holy*** in 2 Peter 1:21 means **"sanctified"** or **"set apart."** Before the foundation of the world, God **set apart** a special group of men to write the sixty-six books of our Bible. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the apostle Paul gave testimony to God's preparation of their lives even before they were born.

"The Lord hath **called me** from the womb." *Isa. 49:1*

"Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I **sanctified** thee, and I **ordained** thee a prophet unto the nations." *Jer. 1:4–5*

"But when it pleased God, who **separated me** from my mother's womb, and **called me** by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." *Gal. 1:15–16*

One of the reasons the Scripture was so instantly accepted by God's people was the fact that **chosen men of God** were the ones used by God to write it. Writings of unregenerate men would not have been considered worthy of the time and effort to read them. Although the forty men were not perfect, they had a deep reverence for God and were considered spiritual leaders of their day. (For a complete list of the writers of Scripture, see lesson 7.)

2. God **prepared** these men, using and transcending their personalities, for the writing of His Word.

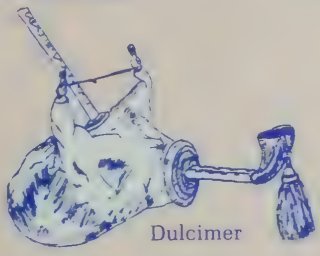
These forty men were all different. Some were leaders, some were musicians, some were teachers, and some were preachers.

Wind Instruments

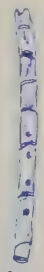
"Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music." *Dan. 3:4–5*

This verse lists several instruments played by Nebuchadnezzar's musicians as a signal for all people to bow to the image of gold. The wind instruments mentioned are the cornet (similar to the shofar, or ram's horn, the national trumpet of Israel); the flute (either a single pipe or an instrument resembling the Greek Pan's pipes); and the dulcimer (an ancient form of the bagpipe). Other wind instruments of Bible times included the single flute or flageolet (Heb. *halil*, "pipe"); the forerunners of such reed instruments as the clarinet and oboe; and the long, slender, silver trumpet, which God commanded Moses to make in Numbers 10.

Ram's horn

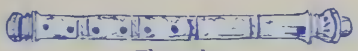


Dulcimer



Flute

Clarinet



Flageolet

Trumpet

Their backgrounds were different, their language was different, and their occupations were different. They each possessed a vocabulary and a writing style that was prepared by God.

Since God is the Creator of language and the Master of all styles, He could give His Word in the styles of David, Peter, Paul, Jeremiah, and thirty-six other men, and yet God's Word remained God's Word. Just as a trumpet, a trombone, and a sousaphone, if "breathed into" by the same musician, all exhibit unique styles, so the forty writers of Scripture, when inspired by God, exhibited their own personal God-prepared styles when they wrote down the words that God breathed into them.

"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." *2 Sam. 23:2*

A bandmaster picks up a trombone and blows his breath through it, giving a trombone sound; he picks up a trumpet, and his breath in the trumpet gives a trumpet sound; his breath

in a French horn gives a French horn sound; his breath in a tuba gives a tuba sound. It is the musician's breath that flows through all the instruments to give the different sounds. So God breathed His Word through the human instruments of David, Peter, Paul, and thirty-seven others. Thus, it is God's Word through David, Peter, and Paul, each part with a different style that was created by God. The forty human writers of the Scriptures were the instruments that God chose and prepared to convey His Word to mankind.

> "And back of that we are to remember that throughout the entire life of the prophet the providential control of God had been preparing him with the particular talents, education and experience which would be needed for the message which he was to give. This providential preparation of the prophets, which gave them the proper spiritual, intellectual and physical background, must, indeed have had its beginning in their remote ancestors. **The result was that the right men were brought to the right places at the right times, and wrote the particular books or gave the particular messages which were designed for them.** When God wanted to give His people a history of their early beginnings, He prepared a Moses to write it. When He wanted to give them the lofty and worshipful poetry of the psalms, He prepared a David with poetic imagination. And since Christianity in its very nature would demand logical statement, He prepared a Paul, giving him a logical mind and the appropriate religious background which would enable him to set it forth in that manner. In this natural way God so prepared the various writers of Scripture that with the appropriate assistance of His directing and illuminating Spirit they freely and spontaneously wrote what He wished as He wished and when He wished. Thus the prophet was fitted to the message, and the message was suited to the prophet. Thus also the distinctive literary style of each writer was preserved, and each writer did a work which no one else was equipped to do."
>
> —Loraine Boettner, *The Inspiration of the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1937), pp. 40–41.

These men prepared by God had a deep respect for His Word as they wrote it down. They eagerly studied and meditated upon everything they received (Dan. 7:15–16; 9:2–6; 1 Tim. 4:15–16; 2 Pet. 3:15–18). It must have been exciting for them to read for the first time what they had just written, God's Word to man.

3. God inspired these men to write some things they could not have known nor understood.

In Genesis 1 God described the creation of the world. He gave that information to mankind through Moses. But neither Moses nor any other human being was an eyewitness to Creation. God breathed into Moses the description of something Moses knew nothing about.

Daniel often admitted that he did not understand what he was writing.

> "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." *Dan. 12:8–9*

> "In human affairs, for instance, the man of business dictates his letters to his secretary in his own words in order that they may contain his exact meaning. He does not assume that his secretary will correctly express important delicate and complicated matters which might be given him in general terms. Much less would the Holy Spirit say to His penman, 'Write to this effect.' **The Bible assumes to speak concerning a number of things which are absolutely beyond the reach of man's wisdom**—the nature and attributes of God, the origin and purpose of man and of the world, man's fall into sin and his present helpless condition, the plan of redemption including our Lord's substitutionary life and death, the glories of heaven, and the torments of hell. **More than a general supervision is necessary if the truth concerning these great and sublime subjects is to be given without error and without prejudice. Inerrancy requires that God shall choose His own words.**"
>
> —Loraine Boettner, *The Inspiration of the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1937), pp. 13–14.

> "Should we see a student who, having taken down the lecture of a profound philosopher, was now studying diligently to comprehend the sense of the discourse which he had written, we should understand simply that he was a pupil and not a master; that he had nothing to do with originating either the thoughts or the words of the lecture, but was rather a disciple whose province it was to understand what he had

transcribed, and so be able to communicate it to others. And who can deny that this is the exact picture of what we have in the following passage from Scripture: 'Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: **searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow;** unto whom it was revealed,' etc. (1 Peter 1:10, 11). Here were inspired writers, studying the meaning of what they themselves had written. If they were prophets on the manward side, they were evidently pupils on the Godward side. With all possible allowance for the human peculiarities of the writers, they must have been reporters of what they heard, rather than the formulators of that which they had been made to understand. How nearly this also describes the attitude of Christ,—a hearer that he might be a teacher: 'All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you' (John 15:15); a reporter that he might be a revealer: 'I have given unto them **the words** which thou gavest me' (John 17:8).

"In these days scholars are very jealous for the human element in inspiration; but the sovereign element is what most impresses the diligent student of this subject."

—A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1949), pp. 173–175.

4. God inspired these men to write about some things of which they had been eyewitnesses.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life: . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."

1 John 1:1–3

The writers of Scripture were normal human beings. In the course of their lives they observed many things, some of which they wrote down in the words that God breathed into them.

5. God makes it clear that being an eyewitness is not sufficient. He had Dr. Luke state that the uninspired accounts of many eyewitnesses of the life of Christ needed correction:

> "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had **perfect** understanding of all things from the very first **[from above],** to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."
>
> *Luke 1:1–4*

In the original the Greek language is very specific. Although many had attempted "to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us" **their writings were inferior.** They were not "perfect," nor could they give "certainty." It was only because Luke had perfect understanding **from God** ("from above") that he could write an infallible book. This was true also of Matthew, Mark, and John; even though they, like the men Luke mentions, were eyewitnesses, their perfect understanding came not from their senses but from above.

6. God inspired the men to write about things that human nature would normally ignore or minimize.

The Bible is unique because it presents men as they really are: sinners in need of salvation. Although man talks of the "little white lie," God killed Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit. Uzzah lost his life because he minimized the importance of God's command not to touch the ark of the covenant. The Bible does not ignore Moses' anger, David's sin of adultery, or Peter's denial of his Lord. It reveals the heart of man to the world so all can see that there is no hope of salvation apart from Jesus Christ. Because "man's thoughts are not God's thoughts" (Isa. 55:8–9), human beings left to themselves could never have written a book so revealing of human nature.

> "The Bible is not such a book as man would write if he could, or could write if he would." —Lewis Chafer

B. Four non-Scriptural views of inspiration

Once a man rejects the supernatural aspect of the Bible (liberalism) he leaves a vacuum which he attempts to fill with his own ideas. Four false teachings have arisen that boldly reject the Biblical view of inspiration.

1. False teaching 1: **Natural inspiration**

This idea teaches that the writers of the Bible were inspired men who reached high levels of creativity like Shakespeare, Milton, Michelangelo, Bach, and Beethoven. This modernistic idea is an incorrect use of the word translated *inspiration* (God-breathed). God did not breathe the words of Shakespeare or the music of Bach! The perpetrators of this teaching are evidently ignorant of the Greek language.

2. False teaching 2: **Partial inspiration**

This false teaching claims that the Bible merely "contains" the Word of God. It claims that some of the Bible is inspired, but not all; the Bible may be accurate in morals and doctrine, but it is unreliable in areas of science and history. This falsehood is rejected for the following reasons:

a. The Bible claims that "all scripture [i.e., **every word**] is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16).

One might say that a classroom "contains" people, desks, chairs, etc. But that may also mean it contains other things that are not people, desks, or chairs. If we say that the Bible "contains" the Word of God, then we are implying that it also contains material that is not the Word of God.

b. If the Holy Spirit could inspire **some** of the Scripture, why not believe that He could inspire it **all?**

c. This modernistic view ultimately makes man the final authority in determining which passages are inspired and which are not.

Any time a fallible human being becomes the final authority, the perfection of the Bible is in jeopardy. Each man would view the Bible differently, and the result would be chaotic and relativistic. Man's authority would rise above the authority of the Bible. Each individual would have the authority to claim that only his favorite

portions were inspired. If a given passage "stepped on his toes," however, he could consider it uninspired.

d. If the Bible is truly God's Word as it claims, then it must be perfect by definition (since the product of a perfect God can be nothing less than perfect).

e. If the Bible is accurate in areas of "major importance," why should it not be accurate also in areas of "minor importance"?

We realize, of course, that **all** of the Bible is important, but those who use this teaching say that we can only trust it on the issues of eternal life (salvation, sanctification, etc.). But surely the book that is accurate in revealing the way to heaven can also accurately describe the laws of heaven and earth. **If we can trust the Bible for our eternal destiny, we can also trust it to be accurate in every area of life and thought.**

Donkey

"And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?"
Num. 22:28

Although not the usual method of prophetic inspiration, the Lord chose to speak to Balaam through the mouth of his ass, or donkey, and the statement was as much God's Word as if it had been uttered by Moses. In Bible times, the donkey was treasured as a beast of burden and symbol of peace. For this reason, Christ entered Jerusalem upon a donkey.

"The Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.

1. It could not be the invention of good men or angels; for they neither would nor could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord,' when it was their own invention.

2. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity.

3. Therefore, I draw this conclusion, that **the Bible must be given by divine inspiration."**

—John Wesley

3. False teaching 3: Conceptual inspiration

This unscriptural idea says that God only inspired the **thoughts** of the Bible and man wrote those thoughts down in his own **words.** It rejects verbal inspiration, saying it is "too mechanical" to imagine God dictating every word, that man would lose his freedom if such a view were true. This false view is rejected for these reasons:

a. The Bible claims every **word** is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Greek word for *scripture* in 2 Timothy 3:16 is *graphe* and means "the writings." The idea is that the **words** that were actually **written** down by the human authors were given by God to them. Thoughts were not written down, but **words.**

> "Which things also we speak, not in **the words** which man's wisdom teacheth, but **[the words]** which the Holy Ghost teacheth." *1 Cor. 2:13*

b. It is impossible to have wordless thoughts.

If the words were not from God, how could we be sure the thoughts were from God? Very slight changes in words or grammar can cause dramatic changes in the thought of a sentence.

c. The writers themselves occasionally did not understand what they were writing.

"I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this."

Dan. 7:15–16

"I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." *Dan. 8:27*

"And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

Dan. 12:8–9

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, . . . Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister." *1 Pet. 1:10–12*

How could the human writers put God's thoughts into their own words if they did not understand what they were writing? God had to dictate to them every word.

4. False teaching 4: The Bible *"becomes"* the Word of God

This error, often called the **"encounter theory,"** teaches that the Bible only **becomes** the Word of God when it speaks to you personally (when you **encounter** a blessing). We know that the Bible is truth whether it is accepted or not.

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy **word** is truth."

John 17:17

An individual's disbelief in the law of gravity does not annul the law. A rejection of the principles of mathematics does not change those basic principles. Likewise, the disregard for some portions of God's Word does not change the fact that God's "Word is truth."

"Let God be true, but every man a liar." *Rom. 3:4*

Summary

All of these false teachings can be rejected with one verse of Scripture: 2 Tim. 3:16.

Man says:	God says: (2 Tim. 3:16)
1. Parts of the Bible are inspired.	"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."
2. The **thoughts** are inspired.	"All **scripture** [the **writings**—the **actual words** that were written down] is given by inspiration of God."
3. Inspiration was **natural.**	"All scripture is **given by inspiration of God** [God-breathed]."
4. The Bible **becomes** the Word of God when it speaks to the individual.	**"All** scripture . . . is **profitable."**

LESSON 4

The Proofs of Inspiration

A. The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God.

The Bible is **unique** because it first **claims** to be written by God and then **proves** its divinity by many infallible proofs.

Some would argue that it is circular reasoning to use the Bible's claim as a proof of its inspiration. They say that **any** book could make such a claim. But the fact is that very few other books **have** claimed to be written by God Himself. And those which have claimed such either did not stand the test of time or are of obviously inferior quality.

1. There are many **powerful statements of inspiration** in the Scriptures.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." *2 Tim. 3:16*

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were **moved by the Holy Ghost.**" *2 Pet. 1:21*

"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word **was in my tongue.**" *2 Sam. 23:2*

"the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah" *Ezra 1:1*

"this scripture . . . which the Holy Ghost by the **mouth of David spake**" *Acts 1:16*

In Isaiah 8:19–20 God through Isaiah warns the people to beware of "wizards that peep, and that mutter," saying that if they do not speak according to the Word of God they should be rejected as prophets. **God's Word is always the test of the validity of man's message.**

2. The phrase **"Thus saith the Lord"** and similar phrases are found over 3,800 times in the Old Testament.

3. **The human writers realized that God was giving them the words.**

"And **the Lord spake** unto Moses, saying . . ."
Ex. 25:1

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for **the Lord hath spoken.**" *Isa. 1:2*

"The words of Jeremiah. . . . To whom **the word of the Lord** came in the days of Josiah." *Jer. 1:1–2*

4. The words of Moses are connected with the words of Christ.

"For **had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me:** for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not **his writings,** how shall ye believe **my words?**" *John 5:46–47*

"If they hear not **Moses and the prophets,** neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."
Luke 16:31

5. Christ placed His stamp of approval on the Scriptures.

"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." *Matt. 4:4*

6. The judgment attached to adding to or taking away from the words of Scripture shows God's attitude toward the importance of His Word.

In three different passages God warns against adding to His Word.

"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: **thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.**"
Deut. 12:32

"Every word of God is pure . . . **Add thou not unto his words.**" *Prov. 30:5–6*

"If any man shall add unto these things, **God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.**"
Rev. 22:18

It is interesting to note that these warnings occur at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of God's Word.

7. Very few other books claim to be the Word of God.

Those that do (e.g., the Koran and the Book of Mormon) are filled with anachronisms and historical inaccuracies.

8. We accept the authorship of reliable literature until proven otherwise.

We assume every book in the library or bookstore was written by the one whose name appears on the cover. We would never question that unless we **knew** someone was writing under a pseudonym or we had other **good evidence** to the contrary. Should we not also accept the Bible's claims of being written by the One it claims to be written by until there is evidence of deceit?

The Bible Stands
HALDOR LILLENAS
HALDOR LILLENAS
1. The Bi-ble stands like a rock un-daunt-ed 'Mid the rag-ing storms of time;
2. The Bi-ble stands like a mountain tow-'ring Far a-bove the works of men;
3. The Bi-ble stands and it will for - ev - er, When the world has passed away;
4. The Bi-ble stands ev-'ry test we give it, For its Au - thor is di - vine;
Its pag-es burn with the truth e-ter-nal, And they glow with a light sub-lime.
Its truth by none ev-er was re - fut-ed, And de-stroy it they nev - er can.
By in-spi - ra - tion it has been giv-en, All its pre-cepts I will o - bey.
By grace a-lone I ex-pect to live it, And to prove it and make it mine.
CHORUS
The Bi-ble stands tho' the hills may tumble, It will firmly stand when the earth shall
crumble; I will plant my feet on its firm foun-da-tion, For the Bi - ble stands.

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B. History has shown that the Bible is the indestructible Word of God.

The Roman emperor **Diocletian** (A.D. 245–313) decreed in A.D. 303 that every Bible should be destroyed. He had been told that if he could destroy the Bible he would destroy Christianity because "Christians are a people of the Book." Feeling he had succeeded, Diocletian raised a column with the inscription in Latin: "*Extincto nomene Christianorum*" (the name of Christian is extinguished). Yet Constantine succeeded him and in the year A.D. 312 replaced the pagan symbols with the symbol of the cross. This remarkable change took place in **less than ten years**.

Fourteen-hundred years after Constantine, the French atheist **Voltaire** (1694–1778) boasted, "One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." Twenty years after the death of Voltaire, the Geneva Bible Society purchased his house for printing the Bible. It later became the Paris headquarters for the British and Foreign Bible Society, which stored and distributed Bibles throughout Europe. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40:8).

1. The indestructibility of the Bible was promised.

"The word of our God shall stand for ever." *Isa. 40:8*

"My word . . . shall not return unto me void." *Isa. 55:11*

"My words . . . shall not depart out of thy mouth." *Isa. 59:21*

"One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." *Matt. 5:18*

"My words shall not pass away." *Matt. 24:35*

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." *Luke 16:17*

2. The indestructibility of the Bible was fulfilled in the copying of the manuscripts.

God's promise of indestructibility has been fulfilled through the centuries. Almost as soon as the original manuscripts (sometimes referred to as the Autographs) were written, copies began to be made. Just as a well-loved copy of the Bible soon begins to deteriorate, so the original manuscripts did not last

long because of constant handling. But **God preserved His Word by the hands of dedicated copyists. These men had such a high regard for Scripture that they went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of their copies.**

The Copyists' Care

It was clear from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 that God's Word had been carefully copied through the centuries. Some of the Old Testament manuscripts discovered dated back to the first century B.C. During that time and before, regulations for the copying of these Biblical manuscripts were passed down orally from generation to generation. When the Jewish oral law was written down (the Talmud—c. A.D. 200), it revealed in documented form the scrupulous care of these copyists of God's Word. Further documentation of this scribal process was confirmed by the Masoretes (măs′ō · rēts), *Hebrew scholars who copied the Hebrew Old Testament from c. A.D. 500 until the invention of the printing press (c. A.D. 1440).*

"The same extreme care which was devoted to the transcription of manuscripts is also at the bottom of the disappearance of the earlier copies. When a manuscript had been copied with the exactitude prescribed by the Talmud [book of Jewish law], and had been duly verified, it was accepted as authentic and regarded as being of equal value with any other copy. If all were equally correct, age gave no advantage to a manuscript; on the contrary, age was a positive disadvantage, since a manuscript was liable to become defaced or damaged in the lapse of time. A damaged or imperfect copy was at once condemned as unfit for use. Attached to each synagogue was a "Gheniza," or lumber cupboard, in which defective manuscripts were laid aside; and from these receptacles some of the oldest manuscripts now extant [in existence] have in modern times been recovered. Thus, far from regarding an older copy of the Scriptures as more valuable, the Jewish habit has been to prefer the newer, as being the most perfect and free from damage."

. . . .

"Extraordinary care was taken to secure perfect accuracy in the transcription of the sacred books. Especially was this the case with the *synagogue rolls*, or copies of the Pentateuch intended for use in the synagogues. These were written on skins, fastened together so as to form a roll, never in modern book form. Minute regulations were laid down in the Talmud for their preparation. 'A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals, prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew. These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals. Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex [manuscript]. The length of each column must not extend over less than forty-eight, or more than sixty lines; and the breadth must consist of thirty letters. The whole copy must be first lined; and if three words be written in it without a line, it is worthless. The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other colour, and be prepared according to a definite receipt [recipe]. **An *authentic* copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least to deviate. No word or letter, not even a *yod*, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him.** . . . Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene; between every word the breadth of a narrow consonant; between every new *parshiah*, or section, the breadth of nine consonants; between every book, three lines. The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so. Besides this, **the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress, wash his whole body, not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink, and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him.** . . . The rolls in which these regulations are not observed are condemned to be buried in the ground or burned; or they are banished to the schools, to be used as reading-books.' "

. . .

"Besides recording varieties of reading, tradition, or conjecture, the Masoretes [Old Testament copyists—A.D. 500–1400] undertook a number of calculations which do not enter into the ordinary sphere of textual criticism. They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the

middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them; and so on. These trivialities, as we may rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which in itself deserves nothing but praise. **The Masoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle—not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter—of the Law should pass away or be lost."**

—Sir Frederick Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), pp. 38–43.

"That the Hebrew text should have been transmitted by copyists through so many centuries is a phenomenon unequalled in the history of literature."

—Robert Dick Wilson

"If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must . . . declare it to be marvelously correct. Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied—a care which has doubtless grown out of true reverence for its holy words—**such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a completely exact text of the Scriptures."**

—Benjamin B. Warfield

"In an article in the *North American Review*, a writer made some interesting comparisons between the writings of Shakespeare and the Scriptures, which show that much greater care must have been bestowed upon the biblical manuscripts than upon other writings, even when there was so much more opportunity of preserving the correct text by means of printed copies than when all the copies had to be made by hand. He said:

" 'It seems strange that the text of Shakespeare, which has been in existence less than two hundred and eight years, should be far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old, during nearly fifteen of which it existed only in manuscript. . . . any dispute as to its readings must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves.

But in every one of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large portion of which materially affects the meaning of the passages in which they occur.' "

—John Lea, *The Greatest Book in the World* (Phila., n.p., 1929), p. 15.

The faithful copying of God's precious Word continued throughout the Middle Ages. Then **by the middle of the fifteenth century the Biblical text was "locked-in" by the invention of the movable-type printing press by Johann Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany.** In 1456, Gutenberg produced the first printed edition of the Bible (the Latin Vulgate). His great desire was to be able to produce inexpensive Bibles "by a machine which never wearies—to every soul which enters life."

Gutenberg's dream has been realized in the amazing circulation which the Bible enjoys. Thirty years ago the British and Foreign Bible Society estimated that to fill its orders for God's Word they would require "one copy every three seconds day and night; 22 copies every minute day and night; 1,369 copies every hour day and night; 32,876 copies every day in the year." Their orders were met as they shipped those Bibles to all parts of the world in "4,583 cases weighing 490 tons."

Papyrus

"And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes." *Ex. 2:3*

The Hebrew word translated *bulrushes* (*gomeh*) refers to the papyrus plant, a member of the sedge family. In Bible times, papyrus grew in thick bunches along the banks of the Nile River, where Pharaoh's daughter found baby Moses in a little boat made of such reeds. About the time of Moses, the Egyptians discovered how to make paper from the plant's long, thick stalks. Our word *paper* comes from the Greek word *papyrus*. The three-cornered stems of the papyrus were hammered together to make a paper which was almost indestructible if kept dry. Much of the Bible was written on this papyrus, or paper.

There is no other book that begins to compare with the circulation of the Bible. It has been read by more people and translated into more languages than any other book. There is a linguistic "rule of thumb" which states that no writing translated into another language will enjoy the same circulation in the translation that it enjoyed in the original. The Bible is the great exception. It has been translated into hundreds of languages and dialects.

> "No other book has known anything approaching this constant circulation, for it is broadly true to say that until recently it is only Christians who have cared enough about the propagation of their beliefs to circulate books."
>
> —Stanley Lawrence Greenslade

The Bible: A World's Record

The world's most widely distributed book is the Bible, portions of which have been translated into 1,763 languages. It has been estimated that between 1815 and 1975 some 2,500 million Bibles were printed, of which 1,500 million were handled by Bible Societies. The total distribution of Bibles by the United Bible Societies (covering 150 countries) in the year 1983 was 11,211,617.

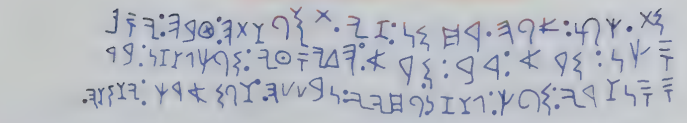
—*Guinness Book of World Records* (New York: Sterling Publ. Co., 1985), p. 143.

3. God has preserved the Bible through the centuries in its translation into many languages.

As the dedicated copyists preserved God's Word for us in the original languages, so consecrated translators gave the peoples of the world God's Word in their own languages.

As early as the fifth century B.C., Ezra found it necessary to translate the Bible publicly from Hebrew to Aramaic (Neh. 8:1–8). In the first century A.D., Greek translations of the Hebrew Old Testament were available to the apostles as they went on their missionary journeys. It is believed that they were able to refer to these regularly along with their treasured copies of the Hebrew Old Testament. Paul could quote from the Old Testament (Deut. 25:4) and the New Testament (Luke 10:7) in **one passage** (1 Tim. 5:18) and say confidently, **"The scripture saith."**

The Aramaic Language



"Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in **Syriack** [Aramaic]." *Dan. 2:4*

The Aramaic language derived its name from those who spoke it, the Aramaeans of northeast Palestine and Syria. The Aramaeans never developed into a large empire, but they are well known for giving a language to the world. Because Aram (or Syria) was on the main caravan route between Babylonia and Egypt, and because Aramaic had a simplified alphabetical system of writing (as opposed to the awkward cuneiform system), it became the commercial and diplomatic language of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. It was quite natural, then, for the Hebrew people under the captivities of those two empires (721 B.C.–536 B.C.) to learn the language of business and diplomacy.

As a result, several portions of the Old Testament were originally written in Aramaic (Dan. 2:4–7:28; Ezra 4:8–6:18, 7:12–26; and Jer. 10:11). Daniel, as a president in the Babylonian empire, knew Hebrew and Aramaic fluently. In captivity the Jewish people (Ezra included) learned Aramaic of necessity. Hebrew children born during that time often learned Aramaic, not Hebrew (Neh. 13:24). As a result, when the Jews returned from Babylon it was necessary for Ezra to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into Aramaic so the people could understand it (Neh. 8:1–8). Aramaic continued as the spoken language of the Jews through the time of Christ but quickly fell into disuse by the end of the first century A.D.

Aramaic is a language comparable to Hebrew with differences primarily in vocabulary, form, and grammar. It is referred to in the Old Testament as **Syriac** (because of its origin) and in the New Testament as **Hebrew** (because of its linguistic similarities).

> "And the writing of the letter was written in **the Syrian tongue** [Aramaic], and interpreted in **the Syrian tongue.**" *Ezra 4:7*
>
> "And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and **Hebrew** [Aramaic], THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." *Luke 23:38*
>
> "And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the **Hebrew** [Aramaic] Golgotha." *John 19:17*
>
> "And he gathered them together into a place called in **the Hebrew** [Aramaic] **tongue** Armageddon." *Rev. 16:16*

It is clear from the New Testament that although Greek was becoming the spoken language of the world in the first century, Jesus Christ and the apostles still spoke Aramaic fluently.

> "And he [Jesus Christ] took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, ***Talitha cumi;*** which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." *Mark 5:41*
>
> "And looking up to heaven, he [Jesus Christ] sighed, and saith unto him, ***Ephphatha,*** that is, Be opened." *Mark 7:34*
>
> "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ***Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" *Matt. 27:46*
>
> "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ***Anathema Maranatha.***" *1 Cor. 16:22*
>
> "But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ***Abba,*** Father." *Rom. 8:15*
>
> "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ***Abba,*** Father." *Gal. 4:6*
>
> "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew [Aramaic] tongue is ***Abaddon,*** but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." *Rev. 9:11*

The desire of John Wycliffe (1320?–1384), an Englishman of the Middle Ages, to see the common person able to read the Bible in English motivated him to complete his translation in 1382. His next effort was to have copies made so that it could be available to those wishing to read it for themselves. One historian writes:

> "The interest taken in the man and in his work, enlisted a hundred expert hands, who, though they toiled to multiply copies, could scarcely supply the many who were eager to buy. Some ordered complete copies to be made for them; others were content with portions; the same copy served several families in many instances, and in a very short time Wicliffe's English Bible had obtained a wide circulation, and brought a new life into many an English home."*

This whole idea of the common person with his own copy of the Scripture was thought to be totally unnecessary (and dangerous) by the Roman priests. The typical response is best summed up in the words of Knighton, who was canon of Leicester:

> "Christ delivered his Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the state of the times and the wants of men. But this Master John Wicliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to women who could read, than it had formerly been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding. And in this way the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine, and that which was before precious to both clergy and laity is rendered, as it were, the common jest of both. The jewel of the Church is turned into the sport of the people, and what was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines is made for ever common to the laity."

This attitude of the ruling church that the Bible was a Book for priests, not for people, finally resulted in the death of anyone found with a copy of Wycliffe's Bible. Many were killed with their copy of that Bible hanging around their neck. John Wycliffe died before much of the persecution began, but thirty years after his death "his memory was pronounced infamous, and it was decreed that his body and bones should be taken from the ground and thrown away from the burial of any church, according to the canon laws and decrees!"

*Quoted material from *John Wicliffe: The Morning Star of the Reformation* (St. Louis, Missouri, Bible Memory Association International, 1972 reprint), pp. 79–83, 104.

"In pursuance of this decree, a few years afterwards his grave . . . was opened, and his remains removed. These were then burnt, and the ashes cast into the adjoining brook named the 'Swift,' and Fuller, describing the scene, quaintly but truly says:

'This brook conveyed them into Avon, the Avon into the

The Bible and Modern Languages

The translations of God's Word have been used of God to enhance the languages of the world.

Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German helped shake the world and refine the German language to a high level.

> "The German Bible produced by [Luther] was to become the national book of Germany, the book whereby, for the first time, she was to proclaim her unity. This is extremely interesting when we remember that John Huss achieved a similar result in Czech, and Calvin in French . . ."
>
> —Frantz Funck-Brentano

> "Luther created the German language, and he did so by translating the Bible." —Heinrich Heine

> "Above all else, Luther gave poetry its language. His German, the German of Luther's Bible, was the fountain at which the German language constantly refreshed itself when it was in danger of losing itself through the influence of a foreign language, Latin or French, or in an artificial literary style."
>
> —Karl Holl

> "No one who knows the nature of a language dares to appear in the presence of Luther without reverence. Among no people has one man done so much to help create their language."
>
> —German poet Friedrich Klopstock

Severn, the Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean; and thus the ashes of Wicliffe were the emblem of his doctrine, which is now dispersed all the world over.' "

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." *Matt. 24:35*

The same could be said of the translations that gave us God's Word in the English language. It has been said that it was the English Bible that above all else kept the English language from becoming obsolete down through the centuries.

"Among the works that have contributed to the formation of modern English an important place must be given to the translations of the Bible, from those of Tindale and Coverdale in the early sixteenth century to the 'Authorized Version' of 1611. The effort to find accurate expression for the thoughts of the sacred writers called forth abundance of ingenuity in the invention of new combinations of words; and the fact that the Bible has for centuries been the most widely read and most frequently quoted of books has made it the most fruitful source of allusive changes of meaning." —Henry Bradley

"The Bible ought to be read, were it only for the sake of the grand English in which it is written, an education in itself."

—Alfred Tennyson (more than four hundred Biblical references have been found in his poetry)

But we must always remember that these translations were not powerful because of the effectiveness of the language in which they were written.

"The Englishmen who went to the stake did not die for these cadences . . . These men were cheerful to die for the **meaning** of the Word and for its **authorship**—because it was spoken *by Christ.*"

—Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

Common Phrases from the Bible

"One has only to be reminded of the phrases from the Bible which have passed into common speech to realize how much vigor and expressiveness it has added to our language:

the apple of his eye
cast thy bread upon the waters
a coat of many colors
a good old age
living fountains of waters
the wife of thy bosom
the valley of decision
a still small voice
miserable comforters
the pride of life
from strength to strength
the little foxes that spoil the vines
precept upon precept, line upon line
as a drop in a bucket
the salt of the earth
the burden and heat of the day
the signs of the times
the children of light
the powers that be
the fashion of this world
decently and in order
a thorn in the flesh
a cloud of witnesses
a crown of life
labor of love
hewers of wood and drawers of water
thou art the man
prisoners of hope
lesser light
the handwriting on the wall
faithful unto death
a mess of pottage
the mantle of Elijah
the elder brother
the widow's mite
the highways and hedges
a pearl of great price
clear shining after rain
stand in awe
the day is at hand
joy cometh in the morning
clear as crystal
hip and thigh
we are the people
the fat of the land
the four winds of heaven
the end is not yet
a book of remembrance
the laborer is worthy of his hire
whited sepulchres
righteous overmuch
not gather figs of thistles
to entertain angels unaware
the wings of the morning
tell it not in Gath
all things to all men
a howling wilderness"

—*The Influence of the English Bible upon the English Language and upon English and American Literature* (New York: American Bible Society, n.d.), p. 5.

The Bible Is—

The charter of all true liberty.
The forerunner of all civilization.
The molder of institutions and governments.
The fashion of law.
The secret of national progress.
The guide of history.
The ornament and mainspring of literature.
The inspiration of philosophies.
The text-book of ethics.
The light of the intellect.
The soul of all strong heart life.
The illuminator of darkness.
The foe of superstition.
The enemy of oppression.
The uprooter of sin.
The comfort in sorrow.
The strength in weakness.
The pathway in perplexity.
The escape from temptation.
The steadier in the day of power.
The embodiment of all lofty ideals.
The begetter of life.
The promise of the future.
The star of death's night.
The revealer of God.
The guide and the hope and the inspiration of man.

—Bishop Wm. F. Anderson

"This Bible is a book which has been refuted, demolished, overthrown, and exploded more times than any other book you ever heard of. Every little while somebody starts up and upsets this book; and it is like upsetting a solid cube of granite. It is just as big one way as the other; and when you have upset it, it is right side up, and when you overturn it again, it is right side up still."

—Dr. H. L. Hastings

LESSON 5

The Proofs of Inspiration (continued)

We have already seen that the Bible is God's Word because it claims to be and because it has never been destroyed. With each additional proof we begin to realize that the evidence is overwhelming. This lesson will discuss two more proofs of inspiration: The Bible's fulfilled prophecy and its scientific accuracy.

A. The fulfilled prophecies of the Bible

This topic is inexhaustible; here is a partial listing of Old and New Testament prophecies that have already been fulfilled.

1. There are many Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ's first coming.

Prophecy	Old Testament reference	New Testament fulfillment
His virgin birth	Isa. 7:14	Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:30–35
His birthplace in Bethlehem	Mic. 5:2	Luke 2:4–7
His forerunner, John the Baptist	Isa. 40:3	John 1:6–8, 19–23
His Triumphal Entry	Zech. 9:9–10	John 12:12–19
His side pierced at Calvary	Zech. 12:10	John 19:34
His cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"	Ps. 22:1*	Matt. 27:46

***Note:** An amazing aspect of David's prophecies in Psalm 22 is that David was not aware of crucifixion as a form of capital punishment. As he was writing (approximately 1000 B.C.), the most common form of capital punishment for the nation of Israel was stoning.

"When it is remembered that crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish, form of execution, the proof of inspiration is irresistible." —C. I. Scofield

Prophecy	Old Testament reference	New Testament fulfillment
Darkness at His crucifixion	Ps. 22:2	Matt. 27:45
Mocking at His crucifixion	Ps. 22:6–8	Matt. 27:39–43
His hands and feet pierced	Ps. 22:16	John 20:24–29
Casting lots for His vesture	Ps. 22:18	Matt. 27:35
His unbroken bones	Ps. 34:20	John 19:36
Given vinegar to drink	Ps. 69:21	Matt. 27:34, 48
Buried in a rich man's grave near the wicked	Isa. 53:9	Matt. 27:57–60
Christ's Resurrection	Ps. 16:10 Hos. 6:2	Luke 24:1–7
Christ's Ascension	Ps. 110:1 Ps. 24:3–10	Acts 1:8–11

2. Many **New Testament prophecies** are fulfilled by historical events.

   a. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70

> "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, **There shall not be left here one stone upon another,** that shall not be thrown down."

In A.D. 70 the Roman armies under Titus besieged Jerusalem for 143 days. Josephus states that Titus finally ordered the entire city to be burned to the ground. The city wall "was so completely leveled with the ground that there was no longer anything to lead those who visited the spot to believe that it had ever been inhabited."

It was said that the heat of the burning city melted the gold of the temple. The resulting liquid seeped between the large foundational stones. The greedy soldiers (regu-

larly paid by plunder) took the temple apart stone by stone in order to reach the gold.

b. The unnatural death of Simon Peter prophesied by Jesus Christ

> "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, . . . when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." *John 21:18–19*

Jerome states that Simon Peter (at his request) was crucified upside down. Peter felt he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Master.

B. The scientific accuracy of the Bible

Although the Bible was not written as a science book, yet when the Bible speaks concerning matters of science, it is scientifically accurate.

1. Scripture

a. God created the universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing).

> "Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." *Heb. 11:3*

b. Moisture in the atmosphere goes through a cycle of evaporation and condensation.

> "He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain." *Ps. 135:7*

c. The earth is spherical in shape.

> "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth." *Isa. 40:22*

d. The earth rotates upon its axis.

> "The earth . . . is turned as clay to the seal." *Job 38:13–14*

e. The earth is suspended in space.

> "He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing." *Job 26:7*

f. Tides vary in the late evening and early morning hours.

"He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end." *Job 26:10*

g. The stars cannot be numbered.

"The host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured." *Jer. 33:22*

Note: In 130 B.C. Hipparchus counted 1,022 stars, and in A.D. 200 Ptolemy counted 1,026 stars. Man still does not know the total number of stars in the universe.

h. The atmosphere has weight.

"to make the weight for the winds" *Job 28:25*

Note: This was not known by scientists until the seventeenth century.

i. The stars travel in certain paths.

"the stars in their courses" *Judg. 5:20*

j. The blood sustains life.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood." *Lev. 17:11*

k. The universe is running down.

"The earth . . . and the heavens . . . shall wax old like a garment." *Ps. 102:25–26*

l. The stars are a great distance from the earth.

"And behold the height of the stars, how high they are!" *Job 22:12*

m. The stars differ in magnitude.

"One star differeth from another star in gl

n. The chemical composition of man and the earth is identical.

ereth that we are dust." *Ps. 103:14*

2. Illustrations of the scientific accuracy of the Bible

a. George Washington

His secretary, Tobias Lear, gave the following account of the events that led up to the death of the first President of the United States:

On Dec. 12, 1799, Washington rode for about five hours to several of his farms in sub-freezing cold. In spite of the fact he developed a severe cold, he again went out on Dec. 13 to check on his farms. That night he awoke several times complaining that it was extremely difficult for him to swallow.

Mr. Rawlins [one of his overseers] came in soon after sunrise and prepared to bleed him. [This was the accepted medical practice in the late eighteenth century. Either a leech was attached to the patient and allowed to suck his blood freely or the physician made a small incision in the arm of the patient and allowed a portion of his blood to drain into a basin.]

Two of his personal physicians arrived and all agreed this method should continue to be the procedure throughout the day. Those watching said the blood came very slowly toward the end. He died that night.

"The practice of bleeding, which by many persons was thought to have killed him, was then so widely used that his doctors would have been censured if they had omitted it. **Sixty years later** it was still in use, and no one can doubt it deprived [George Washington] of his chance of living."

The irony of the whole account was that beside his bed that day was a copy of the Bible. In that Bible could be found Leviticus 17:11—"For the life of the flesh is in the blood."

—Summarized from William Roscoe Thayer, *George Washington* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1922), pp. 240ff.

b. French Academy of Science

In 1861 the French Academy of Science published a brochure in which they listed fifty-one scientific facts that supposedly contradicted the Bible. Today not one scientist believes any one of those "supposed errors."

Though our scientific knowledge continues to experience change, the Bible does not change.

c. Matthew Maury (1806–1873)

Matthew Maury spent much of his life as a United States naval officer traveling on the oceans of the world. During an illness he read in the Psalms a reference to "the paths of the seas" (Ps. 8:8). Believing in the complete scientific accuracy of the Bible, he searched and found what the Bible had revealed thousands of years earlier: the ocean currents travel in specific paths. He was able to gather enough information from many voyages to be able to chart those currents on the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. As a result, those who followed his charts were able to cut down their sailing time considerably.

What Great Scientists Have Said about the Bible

"Why will people go astray when they have this blessed Book to guide them?" —Michael Faraday

"All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more strongly the truths contained in the Holy Scriptures."
—Sir William Herschel

"If all the great books of the world were given life and were brought together in Convention, the moment the Bible entered, the other books would fall on their faces as the gods of Philistia fell when the ark of God was brought into their presence in the temple of Dagon." —Sir Isaac Newton

"I like to study the Guide Book to the country where I am going." —Samuel F. B. Morse

"The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order and harmony which has been imposed on it by God and which He revealed to us in the language of mathematics."
—Johannes Kepler

LESSON 6

The Proofs of Inspiration (continued)

We have seen the Bible's claim of inspiration, its indestructibility, its fulfilled prophecies, and its scientific accuracy. The evidence continues to mount. We will now view its inerrancy, its historical accuracy, and its wonderful power to transform the human heart.

A. The inerrancy of the Bible

Inerrancy means the Bible is **without error throughout,** whether it is speaking historically, scientifically, or morally.

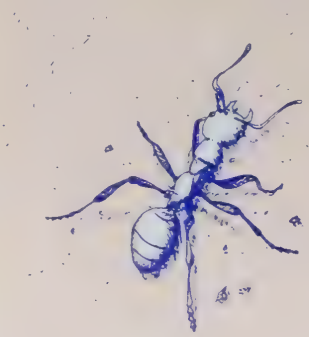
1. An inerrant Book indicates a perfect Author.

(Inaccurate writings or speeches would reveal a less-than-perfect author.)

> "How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken." *Deut. 18:21–22*

Ant

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." *Prov. 6:6–8*



Before the 1880s, liberal theologians ridiculed King Solomon's advice, claiming that the Bible's seed-harvesting ants were legendary. However, after an investigation by European and American entomologists in 1880, it was shown that Mediterranean harvester ants do prepare their food in summer, just as God's Word says. These tiny creatures gather seeds from as many as 18 plant families and store them in underground granaries for winter use. The scientific accuracy of the Bible is also shown through the use of the feminine pronoun: it is now known that all worker ants are female.

2. The Bible claims that every detail within its pages is without error.

> "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." *Matt. 5:18*

3. Christ authenticated the passages which have most often been challenged as to their accuracy.

Matthew 12:40	Jonah and the great fish
Matthew 12:41	Repentance of the city of Nineveh
Matthew 19:3–9	Creation and marriage
Luke 17:26–27	The Flood
Luke 17:28–29	Destruction of Sodom
Luke 17:32*	Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt
Luke 4:27	Miraculous healing of Naaman's leprosy
John 3:14	The brazen serpent

***Note:** The Jewish historian Josephus recounted the story of the destruction of Sodom and the transformation of Lot's wife into a "stele" (or pillar of salt). He added, "And I have observed it, for it still remains even to this day **[first century].**"

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote in the **second century** that Lot's wife remained "a pillar of salt unto this day . . . no longer corruptible flesh, but a pillar of salt which endures forever."

4. Those who most often question the accuracy of the Bible are those who do not give it serious study.

"The Bible is full of errors" is an expression usually repeated by an individual ignorant of Biblical truth.

WHAT BOOK DO YOU HAVE THERE?
THE BIBLE
OH, IT'S FULL OF MISTAKES!
REALLY? COULD YOU SHOW ME SOME?
UH... WELL, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ARE. I'VE NEVER READ IT.

B. The historical accuracy of the Bible

1. Archaeology has confirmed the existence of peoples who were once questioned by Bible skeptics.

The existence of the **Hittites** was questioned in spite of numerous Biblical references to them (Ex. 33:2; Deut. 7:1, 20:17; Josh. 3:10, 24:11). In 1906 Hugo Winkler of Berlin began excavations at Boghazkoy, 90 miles east of Ankara. He discovered it was an ancient Hittite capital. Numerous clay tablets were discovered which were inscribed in the cuneiform characters of the Hittite language.

Now it is known that two great periods of Hittite power are to be noted. The first goes back to 1700 B.C. and the second to c. 1450–1200 B.C. The great Hittite Empire collapsed in 1200 B.C. and the Hittite capital of Boghazkoy fell at that time.

2. Archaeology has confirmed the accuracy of the names, times, and places of reign of over forty different kings by means of documents contemporary with the Bible.

The skeptics for years questioned the existence of **Belshazzar** as a king of Babylon. No Babylonian record known until a few years ago mentioned this king by name. Recent archaeological discoveries have established not only his existence but also his association with his father Nabonidus, king of Babylon, and his relationship to Nebuchadnezzar.

Although Nabonidus was officially king, he left the rule of Babylon to his son, Belshazzar. For this reason Belshazzar is only able to offer Daniel the position of "third ruler in the kingdom" (Dan. 5:16, 29). Nabonidus was first, Belshazzar was second, and Daniel could only be third. Once again the complete historical accuracy of God's Word is verified.

3. Archaeology has confirmed that writing was highly developed when Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

For years skeptics doubted that Moses was capable of writing in the year 1500 B.C. But the deciphering of the famous **Sinai script** in 1948 showed that the Hebrews or their fellow Semites had invented the first alphabet well before 1500 B.C., making it possible for Moses to write the Pentateuch. In fact, the **Code of Hammurabi** and other ancient writings show that cuneiform writing had been invented by the time of Abraham, 500 years before the days of Moses.

4. Those who have accepted the premise that the Bible is historically accurate have made some amazing discoveries.

"The fact that the Standard Oil Company discovered oil and is operating wells in Egypt is generally known, but the reason for its going to that ancient land to look for oil is probably not so well known.

"It is asserted that one of the directors of the company happened to read the second chapter of Exodus. The third verse caught his attention. It states that the ark of bulrushes which the mother of Moses made for her child was 'daubed with slime and with pitch.'

"This gentleman reasoned that where there was pitch, there must be oil, and if there was oil in Moses' time, it is probably still there. So the company sent out Charles Whitshott, its geologist and oil expert, to make investigations, with the result that oil was discovered."

—Paul Lee Tan, ed., *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers), p. 191.

5. Statements by Dr. Nelson Glueck (widely recognized as the dean of Palestinian archaeologists) confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible.

"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of Biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries. They form tesserae [small rectangular tiles] in the vast mosaic of the Bible's almost incredible correct historical memory."

—*Rivers in the Desert* (N. Y.: Farrar, Straus, and Cudaly, 1959), p. 11.

C. The Bible's power to transform lives

1. Scripture

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." *Ps. 119:9*

"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" *Jer. 23:29*

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." *John 17:17*

"It is the power of God unto salvation." *Rom. 1:16*

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." *Heb. 4:12*

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." *1 Pet. 2:2*

2. Examples of the Bible's power to transform lives

a. The Apostle Paul

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." *1 Tim. 1:12–15*

b. John Newton (A.D. 1725–1807), hymn writer of "Amazing Grace"

John Newton of England was probably as wicked a man as has ever lived. As a young man he ran away to sea, where his sinful behavior almost cost him his life on several occasions. He was eventually sold as a slave in Africa and reduced to living on crumbs and roots he dug up under the secrecy of night. When he finally escaped, he accepted the vile lifestyle of all with whom he came in contact. But through a missionary God laid hold on his life. Newton accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, and later God called him to preach.

Although John Newton was a great preacher, he is probably best remembered as a writer of hymns, many of which are still sung around the world. Perhaps his most famous hymn, "Amazing Grace," was his personal testimony.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

He also wrote "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" and "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds."

In the church in London of which he was the pastor, there is still an epitaph which John Newton wrote for himself. It reads:

Sacred to the memory of
John Newton
once a libertine and blasphemer and slave of slaves in Africa, but renewed, purified, pardoned, and appointed to preach the Gospel which he had laboured to destroy.

In Evil Long I Took Delight

In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopp'd my wild career:
I saw One hanging on a Tree
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd His languid eyes on me,
As near His Cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look:
It seem'd to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke:
My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His Blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail Him there.

Alas! I knew not what I did!
But now my tears are vain:
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain!
—A second look He gave, which said,
'I freely all forgive;
This Blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die, that thou may'st live.'

Thus, while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals my pardon too.
With pleasing grief, and mournful joy,
My spirit now is fill'd,
That I should such a life destroy,—
Yet live by Him I kill'd!

—John Newton (1725–1807)

c. George Müller (1805–1898)

George Müller, as a German youth of sixteen, was already living a life of drunkenness, gambling, thievery, and rebellion. On one occasion he was arrested and imprisoned for theft. At the age of twenty he was invited by a friend to a home Bible study and prayer meeting. The sight of a dedicated young man there praying to a personal God gripped his heart. That night in the privacy of his room he cried out to God and asked Him to save his wretched soul. His life was dramatically changed.

As a college student at the University of Halle he observed two things that were later to change the course of his ministry. He observed the tremendous ministry of the orphanage in the lives of young people, and he met workers in that ministry whose daily needs were met by God. When God called him to work as a missionary in London, and later Bristol, England, God used those impressions to motivate him to establish orphanages in Bristol (and elsewhere) by faith in God's provisions.

Throughout the rest of his life, George Müller made it a daily practice to read and study the Bible and appropriate God's promises by faith and prayer. Although he engaged in no appeals for funds and did not make his needs known publicly, Müller was able to provide for his orphanages and for more than 2,000 orphans on the basis of taking God at His Word. In addition, Müller was able to contribute over $135,000 to other missionary and charitable causes because of his faith in a prayer-answering God. His great answers to prayer and his dedication to the God of the Bible have inspired other Christians to pray and trust God for their needs.

What Outstanding Men and Women Have Said about the Bible

"What is the secret of England's superiority among the nations? Go tell your prince that this [the Bible] is the secret of England's political greatness."

—Queen Victoria of England

"The Bible, a book in comparison with which, in my eyes, all others are of minor importance, has never failed to give me strength."

—Robert E. Lee

"Forty years I have loved the Word of God. I feel the blessed pages under my hand with special thankfulness, as a rod and a staff to keep my steps firm through the valley of shadow of depression and world calamity. Truly, the Bible, the teaching of our Savior, is the 'only way out of the dark.' "

—Helen Keller

"If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

—Daniel Webster

LESSON 7

The Canonicity of the Bible

A **canon** is a measuring rod, rule, or standard. In reference to the Bible, the Canon means those books measured and found satisfactory as a part of the inspired Word of God. **Canonicity** (kăn′un·ĭs′i·tĭ) is a book's right to be included in the Biblical Canon because God has determined it so and man has recognized it as inspired by God.

A. Canonicity is determined by God.

Canonicity must be viewed in two stages. Canonicity is **determined** by God and **recognized** by man. But man's attitude does not dictate whether or not a book is canonical. A specific book is valuable because it is canonical, not canonical because it is valuable. If the latter were true, man would become the final authority in determining God's Word.

In spite of the fact that the Bible does not discuss the canonization of the Bible per se, it may not be as difficult to determine as might first be imagined. Little else was being written when the books of the Old Testament were being recorded. The Scripture was given by God to men who were in positions of authority and were consistently considered to be the spokesmen for God. Moses, for example, simply preserved in writing what God had orally given to him. **Fifty percent of Exodus and ninety percent of Leviticus are direct quotations from God.**

In the New Testament, the words of Christ (God incarnate) revealed much about the books He determined to be canonical. Jesus Christ quoted freely from many of the books of the Old Testament and referred to them as Scripture from God. He also stamped with divine approval the books that would be written (the New Testament).

Christ quoting Psalm 118:22–23:

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in **the scriptures,** The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" *Matt. 21:42*

Christ quoting Isaiah 61:1–2:

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sab-

bath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is **this scripture** fulfilled in your ears." *Luke 4:16–21*

Christ preauthenticating the New Testament:

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into **all truth:** . . . and he will shew you **things to come.**" *John 16:13*

B. Canonicity is recognized by man.

How did the early church leaders recognize God's Word? The following five questions were posed by the early church leaders as an aid in accurately recognizing God's Word. By means of the following questions they were able to recognize the canonicity of the 66 books of our Bible.

1. Is it **authoritative?**

The first question they asked was: "Does a particular book have the authority of God behind it?" Use of phrases such as "thus saith the Lord," and "the word of the Lord came" were considered significant. No Hebrew individual would have lightly added phrases such as those to any book unless he knew it was actually the Word of God.

2. Is it **prophetic?**

The next question they asked was whether or not a book was written by a **man of God** (e.g., a prophet or one with apostolic authority). Some books were temporarily questioned because of differences in style from one of an author's writings to another. But it was quickly realized that one person can easily write in two different styles depending upon the content of his writing. A lawyer writes far differently when he is preparing a legal brief than when he is writing a love letter to his wife.

What American Presidents Have Said about the Bible

"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." —George Washington

"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book."
—Abraham Lincoln

"That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests." —Andrew Jackson

"The Bible is the Word of life—it is a picture of the human heart displayed for all ages and all sorts of conditions of men. I feel sorry for the men who do not read the Bible every day. I wonder why they deprive themselves of the strength and pleasure."
—Woodrow Wilson

"So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year."
—John Quincy Adams

It should be pointed out that the fact that a book was questioned does not mean its case for canonicity is weak. On the contrary, solid testing makes it stronger because it has passed the test and come forth as gold. These early scholars had such a holy reverence for the Word of God that they wanted to make sure they were not guilty of adding to the Word of God a book that had no right to be considered such.

Who were these human writers of the words that were breathed of God? Although some are unknown, the ones that are known were clearly **men of God.**

Writer	Inspired Writings
Moses	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Psalm 90
Joshua	Joshua
Ezra	Ezra, 1 & 2 Chronicles (probably; not certain)
Nehemiah	Nehemiah
Mordecai	Esther (?) (Ezra and Nehemiah are also possible writers of Esther.)
David	Psalms (wrote at least 73 of the Psalms)
Asaph	Psalm 50, Psalms 73–83
Descendants of Korah	Psalms 42, 44–49, 84, 87–88
Heman the Ezrahite	Psalm 88
Ethan the Ezrahite	Psalm 89
Solomon	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Psalm 72 (?), Psalm 127
Isaiah	Isaiah
Jeremiah	Jeremiah, Lamentations, 1 & 2 Kings (?)
Ezekiel	Ezekiel
Daniel	Daniel
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Micah	Micah
Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	Zephaniah
Haggai	Haggai
Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi
Matthew	Gospel of Matthew
Mark	Gospel of Mark
Luke	Gospel of Luke, Acts of the Apostles
John the Apostle	Gospel of John; 1, 2, & 3 John; The Revelation
Paul	Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews (?)
James (half-brother of Jesus)	James
Peter	1 & 2 Peter
Jude	Jude

The authorship of the following books is not certain: Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, Job, and several Psalms.

3. Is it authentic?

This question attempts to determine whether or not a certain book reveals **God's truth.** A book that taught lying for the glory of God or prayer for the dead was quickly rejected. It was not considered to be **authentic.** Most of the **Apocrypha** (books written between the Old and New Testaments) was denied canonicity because of its failure to agree with the Scriptures. The Apocrypha is not authentic; therefore, it is not a part of the Canon.

It should also be noted that the Lord does not approve of all the **sentiments** which the Bible records. Inspiration indicates the **accuracy** of the record, but does not indicate that God is pleased with the sins and some of the statements that are recorded. God cannot condone sin nor approve Satan's lies. These revelations were given to us so we could see the folly of sin and life apart from God.

The book of Ecclesiastes is an example of this. In Ecclesiastes God shows us that the best of the conclusions that a man can reach on his own about the wisdom of life is "vanity."

Bat

"But these are they of which ye shall not eat . . . the bat." *Deut. 14:12, 18*

Bats, the only flying mammals, belong to the order *Chiroptera* ("hand-wing") and are the world's most expert flyers. They are found throughout Palestine, are mostly insectivorous, and are easily seen as unclean because of their powerful and persistent musky odor and foul-smelling guano deposits in caves.

4. Is it dynamic?

This question seeks to discover whether a book possesses the **power** of God. Is the book able to change lives? Each book has as its theme Jesus Christ. Luke 24:44 records that the entire Old Testament speaks of Christ. The Old Testament as well as the New Testament is sufficient to lead a person to the Savior. Each book possesses the **power** of God.

> "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned . . . and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures [Old Testament], which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."
>
> *2 Tim. 3:14–15*

5. Was it **received, used,** and **preserved** by the people of God?

2 Peter 3:15–16 indicates that the writings of Paul were immediately accepted as canonical.

> "Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood."

The other books of the Bible were quickly accepted and used as Scripture as they became available. The early Jews went to great lengths to preserve the writings of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The writings of the early church leaders consistently quoted from these sources as being authoritative.

Immediate Acceptance of the Scriptures

"For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have,) but only twenty-two books,* which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be divine. . . . It is true our [Jewish] history hath been written since Artaxerxes [the Apocrypha] very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time: and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own na-

*To see how the twenty-two books of Josephus consist of the thirty-nine books of our Old Testament, see lesson 8.

tion, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one hath been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but **it is become natural to all Jews, immediately** and from their birth, **to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them."**

—Flavius Josephus, First Century Jewish historian

"Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, **under the inspiration of the Spirit,** he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you."

—Clement of Rome (A.D. 96), personal friend of Paul (Phil. 4:3) in his letter to the Corinthians reminding them of 1 Cor. 3:4–10

"I am sure that you are well trained in the **sacred Scriptures,** . . . Now, as it is said in these **Scriptures: 'Be angry and sin not,'** and **'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.'** Blessed is he who remembers this."

—Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and personal friend of the apostle John quoting from Eph. 4:26 (c. A.D. 115). In this letter to the church at Philippi Polycarp quoted from or alluded to 22 of the 27 New Testament books.

[I am writing] "to persuade you that you have not understood anything of the **Scriptures,** I will remind you of another **psalm, dictated to David by the Holy Spirit."** —Justin Martyr (martyred in A.D. 165)

"Irenaeus [died A.D. 202] stated that the apostles taught that God is the Author of both Testaments (*Against Heretics* IV 32.2) and evidently considered the New Testament writings to form a second Canon. He quoted from every chapter of Matthew, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians, from all but one or two chapters of Luke, John, Romans, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, from most chapters of Mark, . . . Acts, 2 Corinthians, and Revelation." —Wilbur N. Pickering

"How happy is its [Rome's] church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood! where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's!

where Paul wins his crown in a death like John's [John the Baptist]! where the Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island-exile! See what she has learned, what taught, what fellowship has had with even (our) churches in Africa! One Lord God does she acknowledge, the Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus (born) of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God the Creator; and the Resurrection of the flesh; **the law and the prophets she unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith."**

—Tertullian (A.D. 208)

Many years ago in England a group of Bible scholars were discussing different thought-provoking questions. The question arose, "Suppose the New Testament had been destroyed and every copy lost at the end of the third century; could it be reconstructed from the writings of the Church Fathers of the second and third centuries?" One individual at that meeting, Sir David Dalrymple (1726–1792), accepted the challenge. For the next two months he searched through all the documents of the second and third century church leaders. He reported back to the group that, in spite of his limited time and resources, he had been able to reconstruct from the writings of those early expositors of God's Word the entire New Testament except for eleven verses.

LESSON 8

The Canonicity of the Bible (continued)

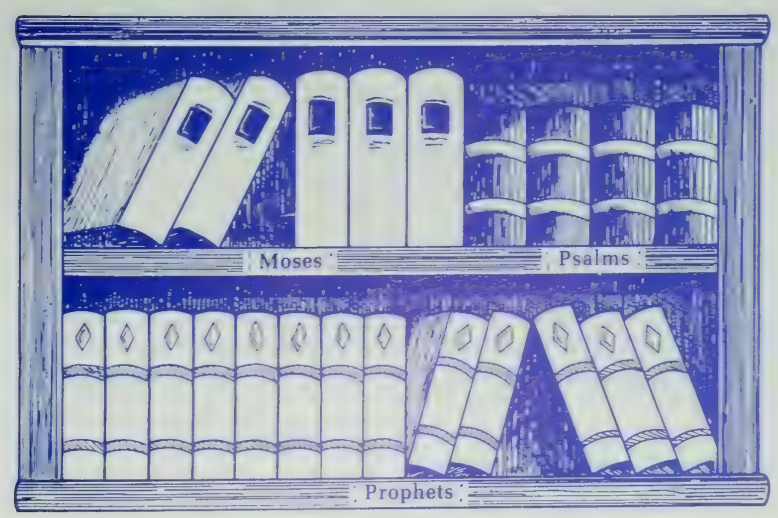
We have seen how God determined in eternity past which books to include in the canon of Scripture. We also learned the process by which man was able to recognize the Scripture as being from God. **Any question of canonicity was removed when Jesus Christ, God Himself, approved of the 39 books of the Old Testament and preauthenticated the 27 books of the New Testament.**

A. The canonicity of the Old Testament was approved by Christ.

1. The Old Testament's three main sections were approved by Christ.

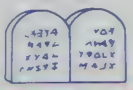
> "And he [Christ] said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in **the law** of Moses, and in **the prophets**, and in **the psalms**, concerning me." *Luke 24:44*

It is clear that the three-fold division of the Old Testament that Christ alluded to was the typical division of the Old Testament in His day. Josephus, Jewish historian of the first century, described the Old Testament canon in this exact three-fold manner:



Josephus' Division of the Old Testament*

Books of Moses
1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy



Psalms
1. Psalms
2. Proverbs
3. Ecclesiastes
4. Job

Prophets
1. Joshua
2. Judges–Ruth
3. Samuel (1 & 2)
4. Kings (1 & 2)
5. Chronicles (1 & 2)
6. Ezra–Nehemiah
7. Esther
8. Isaiah
9. Jeremiah–Lamentations
10. Ezekiel
11. Daniel
12. Twelve Minor Prophets
13. Song of Solomon

*Several books seem to have been grouped as one during the time of Christ (and Josephus). In addition, one book often stood as the title for all other books in its section. For example, "Psalms" was the title for the poetic section in the first century.

Modern Division of the Old Testament

Law
1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

History
1. Joshua
2. Judges
3. Ruth
4. 1 Samuel
5. 2 Samuel
6. 1 Kings
7. 2 Kings
8. 1 Chronicles
9. 2 Chronicles
10. Ezra
11. Nehemiah
12. Esther

Poetry
1. Job
2. Psalms
3. Proverbs
4. Ecclesiastes
5. Song of Solomon

Major Prophets
1. Isaiah
2. Jeremiah
3. Lamentations
4. Ezekiel
5. Daniel

Minor Prophets
1. Hosea
2. Joel
3. Amos
4. Obadiah
5. Jonah
6. Micah
7. Nahum
8. Habakkuk
9. Zephaniah
10. Haggai
11. Zechariah
12. Malachi

2. Jesus Christ approved the Old Testament Canon.

> "From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation."
>
> *Luke 11:51*

The "blood of Abel" is found in Genesis 4:8, and the "blood of Zacharias" is found in 2 Chronicles 24:21. While Genesis is the first book of the Hebrew Old Testament, 2 Chronicles is the last book (see chart below). **Christ is putting His stamp of approval on every book of the Old Testament from the first to the last.**

Order of Old Testament Books in the Hebrew Bible

1. Genesis	14. Ezekiel	27. Psalms
2. Exodus	15. Hosea	28. Job
3. Leviticus	16. Joel	29. Proverbs
4. Numbers	17. Amos	30. Ruth
5. Deuteronomy	18. Obadiah	31. Song of Solomon
6. Joshua	19. Jonah	32. Ecclesiastes
7. Judges	20. Micah	33. Lamentations
8. 1 Samuel	21. Nahum	34. Esther
9. 2 Samuel	22. Habakkuk	35. Daniel
10. 1 Kings	23. Zephaniah	36. Ezra
11. 2 Kings	24. Haggai	37. Nehemiah
12. Isaiah	25. Zechariah	38. 1 Chronicles
13. Jeremiah	26. Malachi	39. 2 Chronicles

It must also be kept in mind that our present listing of Old and New Testament books is not chronological. The major and minor prophets were writing **during** the times of the kings, the Babylonian exile, and the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. The following chart may be helpful in getting the correct perspective of our Old Testament books and Hebrew history. (The entire New Testament was written during the first century, closing with the book of the Revelation, which was written in A.D. 95–96.)

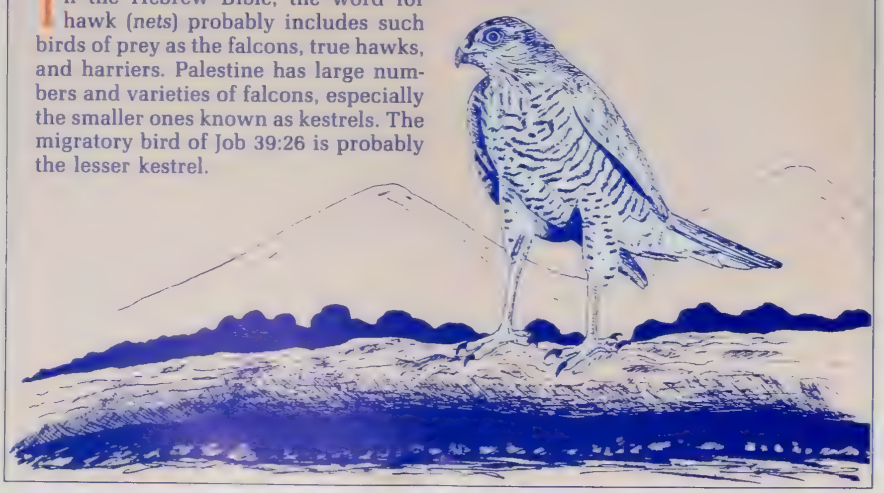
Chronology of Hebrew History

Historical Period	Biblical Writings of the Period	
Beginning of Hebrew History 1920–1491 B.C.	Genesis	Job (?)
Wilderness Wanderings 1491–1451 B.C.	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	
Conquest 1451–1443 B.C.	Joshua	
Period of Judges 1443–1095 B.C.	Judges, Ruth	
United Kingdom 1095–975 B.C.	1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1–11	Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
Divided Kingdom 975–605 B.C.	1 Kings 12–22, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah
Babylonian Exile 605–536 B.C.		Ezekiel, Daniel, Habakkuk
Post-Exilic Period 536–c. 400 B.C.	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Hawk

"Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?"
Job 39:26

In the Hebrew Bible, the word for hawk (*nets*) probably includes such birds of prey as the falcons, true hawks, and harriers. Palestine has large numbers and varieties of falcons, especially the smaller ones known as kestrels. The migratory bird of Job 39:26 is probably the lesser kestrel.



3. Quotations of the Old Testament by Christ show His approval of the canon.

In the four Gospels there are at least thirty-five direct references to the Scriptures by the Son of God. They show Christ's approval of the entire Old Testament canon.*

B. The canonicity of the New Testament was preauthenticated by Christ.

1. Christ preapproved of the New Testament by promises He made to the apostles.

"Howbeit when he, **the Spirit of truth**, is come, he **will guide you into all truth**: . . . and he will show you things to come." *John 16:13*

"But the Comforter, which is **the Holy Ghost**, whom the Father will send in my name, he **shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.**" *John 14:26*

2. The apostles were aware that God was giving them His precious Word.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But **these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ**, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." *John 20:30–31*

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which **man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.**" *1 Cor. 2:13*

*See Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; cf. Luke 4:4, 8, 12. Luke 4:16–27. Matt. 5:17, 18, 21–43. Matt. 6:29. Matt. 8:4; cf. Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14. Matt. 8:11; cf. Luke 13:28. Matt. 9:13. Luke 16:29–31. Matt. 10:15; cf. Mark 6:11. Matt. 11:10; cf. Luke 7:26, 27. Matt. 12:3–8; cf. Mark 2:24–28; Luke 6:3–5. Matt. 12:40–42; cf. Luke 11:29–32. Matt. 13:14, 15. Matt. 15:1–9; cf. Mark 7:6–12. Matt. 16:4. Matt. 17:11; cf. Mark 9:11–13. Matt. 19:3–9; cf. Mark 10:2–12. Matt. 19:18, 19; cf. Mark 10:19; Luke 10:26, 27; 18:20. Luke 18:31. Matt. 21:13–16; cf. Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46. Matt. 21:42; cf. Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17. Matt. 22:28–33; cf. Mark 12:24–31; Luke 20:37–39. Matt. 22:36–40. Matt. 22:34, 44, 45; cf. Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44. Matt. 23:1–3, 23, 35; cf. Luke 11:51. Matt. 24:15, 16; cf. Mark 13:14. Luke 17:26–31. Matt. 24:24, 31. Mark 14:21, 27. Luke 22:37. Matt. 26:53–56. Mark 14:49. Matt. 27:46; cf. Mark 15:34. Luke 23:46. Luke 24:25–32, 44–47. John 1:51; 3:14; 5:39, 45–47; 6:32, 45; 7:19–23, 38, 39; 8:39, 40, 44, 56–58; 10:33–36; 13:18, 26; 17:12, 17; 19:28.

The writer of a New Testament book had to be an individual with **apostolic authority.** We believe, therefore, that when the apostle John finished writing the book of the Revelation the New Testament canon was complete.

Modern Division of the New Testament

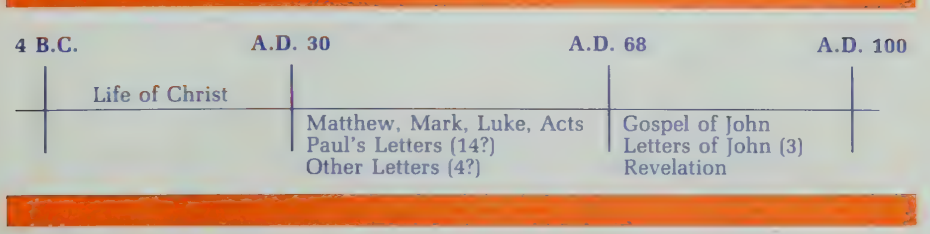
Gospels	1. Matthew	2. Mark	3. Luke 4. John
History	Acts		
Pauline Epistles	1. Romans 2. 1 Corinthians 3. 2 Corinthians 4. Galatians 5. Ephesians	6. Philippians 7. Colossians 8. 1 Thessalonians 9. 2 Thessalonians 10. 1 Timothy	11. 2 Timothy 12. Titus 13. Philemon 14. Hebrews (?)
General	1. James 2. 1 Peter 3. 2 Peter	4. 1 John 5. 2 John 6. 3 John	7. Jude
Prophecy	Revelation		

Coney (Hyrax)

"The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks."
Prov. 30:26

This little rabbit-sized mammal lives exclusively in Africa and southwest Asia. One kind hides in trees to escape from predators; another, the rock hyrax, trusts in the rocks for its refuge. The otherwise defenseless animal clings to the rocks by means of little suction cups on its padded feet. God refers to the rock hyrax twice in Scripture to remind us to make Him our Rock of refuge (Ps. 104:18; Prov. 30:26). The coney is mentioned along with the hare (rabbit) in Leviticus 11:5–6 and Deuteronomy 14:7 as an animal that "chews the cud." Skeptics used to scoff at this verse, saying that coneys are not ruminants (cud chewers). Then scientists found out that although these little animals are not strictly speaking ruminants, they do pass little "pills" of partially digested food and then rechew them for a second trip through their digestive systems; thus they do "chew the cud." This fact is another striking example of the Bible's scientific accuracy.

Time Setting of the New Testament Writings



C. The canonicity of the Apocrypha is rejected.

The Apocrypha is a group of books written during the period between the Old and the New Testaments and found in the Roman Catholic versions of the Bible. They are denied canonicity for the following reasons:

1. They **never claim inspiration** for themselves.

2. Some of their teaching is **heretical.**

The Apocrypha teaches such un-Scriptural doctrines as sinless perfection, the worship of angels, prayer for the dead, and almsgiving for salvation. Notice the following obviously wrong statements of the Apocrypha.

Apocryphal Heresy

"For alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin. Those that exercise alms and righteousness, shall be filled with life." *Tobit 12:9*

"For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain, to pray for the dead." *2 Maccabees 12:44*

3. They were **never sanctioned** by the early church leaders.

On one occasion Augustine argued Bible doctrine with a contemporary. His antagonist proceeded to quote from 2 Maccabees. Augustine replied that his case must be weak if he had to resort to a book not in the same category as those received and accepted by the Jews.

4. They were **never allowed a place** in the canon **for the first four centuries after Christ.**

In A.D. 404 Jerome, in translating the Latin Vulgate, distinguished the Apocrypha from the Canon, which in effect accorded to them a secondary status. Some of the apocryphal books were included with early copies of the English Bible, but mainly as an historical reference. Those same English Bibles also included detailed genealogical records and a complete hymnal. Since printed material was at a premium the early church member could find everything he needed in one volume, some inspired (the Bible) and some not (the Apocrypha, genealogies, expository notes, and hymns).

5. Books in the Apocrypha not only **contradict the Bible,** but they also **contradict each other.**

What Intellectuals Have Said about the Bible

"It is a belief in the Bible which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life . . . The farther the ages advance in civilization the more will the Bible be used." —Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"No better lessons can I teach my child than those of the Bible." —Denis Diderot

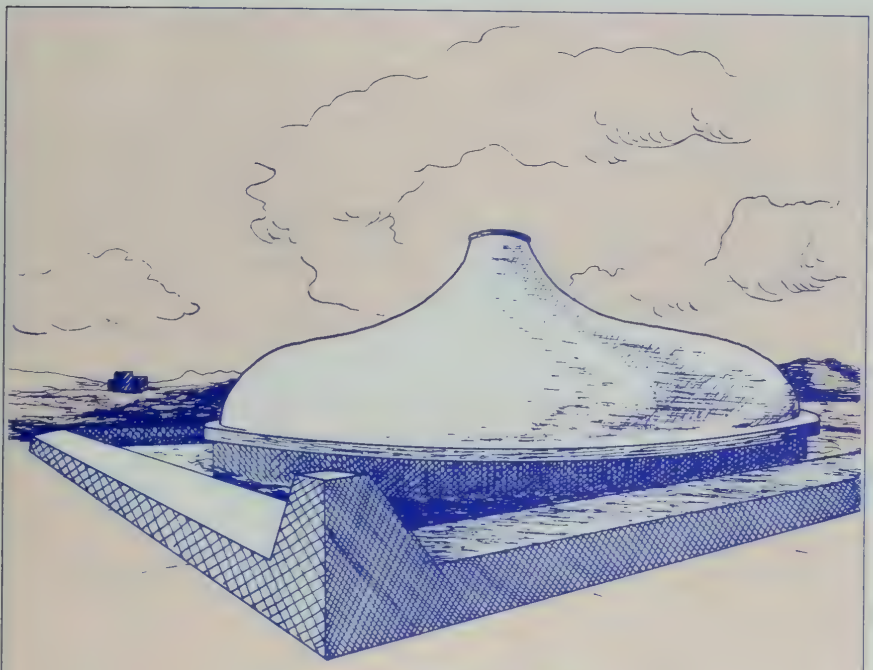
"Peruse the books of philosophers with all their pomp of diction. How meager, how contemptible are they when compared with the Scriptures! The majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration."
—Jean Jacques Rousseau

"Young man, my advice to you is that you cultivate an acquaintance with and firm belief in the Holy Scriptures, for this is your certain interest. I think Christ's system of morals and religion, as He left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see."
—Benjamin Franklin

6. The quality of the Apocrypha is far below that of the Bible, even to the point of occasionally teaching immorality.

The Apocrypha teaches that lying can be all right on occasion if it is done "for the glory of God." It also recommends suicide, assassination, and black magic as viable alternatives in critical situations.

7. The books of the Apocrypha were never received by the people of God.



The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1947 the religious world was thrilled with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves of Qumran near the northwest bank of the Dead Sea. Until that find the earliest Hebrew manuscript available was dated in the tenth century after Christ. In the eleven caves of Qumran thousands of leather fragments and some of the papyrus have been recovered which date from 100 B.C. to A.D. 100. All the Old Testament books except Esther are represented by the Dead Sea Scrolls. The most complete scrolls include two of Isaiah, one of the Psalms, and one of Leviticus. In spite of the fact that (1) the scrolls also include many secular works and (2) the scrolls are dated after the time of the writing of the Apocrypha, the books in the Apocrypha **are not represented significantly** in the manuscripts discovered at Qumran. The Dead Sea Scrolls are housed in Jerusalem's beautiful Shrine of the Book Museum, shown above.

The Greek Language

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." *Rev. 1:8*

A	α	alpha	H	η	eta	N	ν	nu	T	τ	tau
B	β	beta	Θ	θ	theta	Ξ	ξ	xi	Υ	υ	upsilon
Γ	γ	gamma	I	ι	iota	O	ο	omicron	Φ	φ	phi
Δ	δ	delta	K	κ	kappa	Π	π	pi	X	χ	chi
E	ε	epsilon	Λ	λ	lambda	P	ρ	rho	Ψ	ψ	psi
Z	ζ	zeta	M	μ	mu	Σ	σ,ς	sigma	Ω	ω	omega

As Alexander the Great established his Greek empire by conquering the known world in the fourth century B.C., he spread his Greek language as well. Alexander's Greek was not the standard literary language of the Hellenistic Age (c. 300–30 B.C.) but a modified and simplified common (**koine**) Greek of the eastern Mediterranean. It was the language of the common person. Therefore, it was the perfect language for the gospel of the New Testament, the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to a dying world.

As the Hebrew language was the perfect vehicle for the Old Testament narratives, so koine Greek was the perfect vehicle for the precision of New Testament doctrine. This exactness is especially seen in the Greek language's intricate verb system. In the present tense the Greek verb can show indefinite or progressive action. The past tense (aorist or perfect systems) can show events fulfilled in the past as well as past actions with continuous results. These nuances of meaning are especially important regarding the work of God in the past which still has significance today. The following charts show how one verb, *luo* ("to loose"), can be translated in each of its different systems by the closest English equivalent possible.

GREEK VERB SYSTEM: PRESENT

Active Voice				
Indicative	Present tense	λύω	*luō*	"I loose, I am loosing"
	Imperfect tense	ἔλῡον	*eluon*	"I was loosing"
Subjunctive	(always present)	λύω	*luō*	"I would/should loose"
Optative	(always present)	λύοιμι	*luoimi*	"May I loose" (very rare in NT)
Imperative	(always present)	λῦε	*lue*	"You (Thou) loose!" no first person
Infinitive	(all inclusive)	λύειν	*luein*	"To loose"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λύων	*luōn*	"loosing"
Middle Voice	(Subjunctive, Optative, Imperative, Infinitive, and Participle are the same for the Passive Voice)			
Indicative	Present tense	λύομαι	*luomai*	"I loose for myself" (intent)
	Imperfect tense	ἐλῡόμην	*eluomēn*	"I was loosing for myself"
Subjunctive	(always present)	λύωμαι	*luōmai*	"I would/should loose for myself"
Optative	(always present)	λῡοίμην	*luoimēn*	"May I loose for myself"
Imperative	(always present)	λύου	*luou*	"You (Thou) loose for thyself"
Infinitive	(all inclusive)	λύεσθαι	*luesthai*	"To loose for one's self"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λῡόμενος	*luomenos*	"loosing for one's self"
Passive Voice				
Indicative	Present tense	λύομαι	*luomai*	"I am being loosed"
	Imperfect tense	ἐλῡόμην	*eluomēn*	"I was being loosed"

GREEK VERB SYSTEM: AORIST

Active Voice				
Indicative	Aorist	ἔλῡσα	*elusa*	"I loosed"
Subjunctive	Aorist	λύσω	*lusō*	"I should/was motivated to loose" (with the understanding that I did)
Imperative	Aorist	λῦσον	*luson*	"Loose!" (in past sense)
Infinitive	Aorist	λῦσαι	*lusai*	"To have loosed"
Participle	Aorist	λύσᾱς	*lusas*	"Having loosed" (a very important form)
Middle Voice				
Indicative	Aorist	ἐλῡσάμην	*elusamēn*	"I loosed" (for myself)
Subjunctive	Aorist	λύσωμαι	*lusōmai*	"I (ought) have loosed" (special applications)
Imperative	Aorist	λῦσαι	*lusai*	"Loose! for thyself" (in past sense)
Infinitive	Aorist	λύσασθαι	*lusasthai*	"To have loosed for one's self"
Participle	Aorist	λῡσάμενος	*lusamenos*	"Having loosed for one's self"
Passive Voice				
Indicative	Aorist	ἐλύθην	*eluthēn*	"I (in past time) was loosed"
Subjunctive	Aorist	λυθῶ	*luthō*	"I should/was motivated to have been loosed" (with the understanding that I was)
Imperative	Aorist	λύθητι	*luthēti*	"Be (thou) loosed" (in past time)
Infinitive	Aorist	λυθῆναι	*luthēnai*	"To have been loosed"
Participle	Aorist	λυθείς	*lutheis*	"Having been loosed" (important form)

GREEK VERB SYSTEM: PERFECT

Active Voice				
Indicative	Perfect tense	λέλυκα	*leluka*	"I have loosed"
	Pluperfect tense	ἐλελύκη	*elelukē*	"I had loosed"
Infinitive	Perfect tense	λελυκέναι	*lelukenai*	"To have loosed"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λελυκῶς	*lelukōs*	"Having loosed"
Middle Voice				
Indicative	Perfect tense	λέλυμαι	*lelumai*	"I have loosed for myself"
	Pluperfect tense	ἐλελύμην	*elelumēn*	"I had loosed for myself"
Infinitive	(Perfect tense)	λελύσθαι	*lelusthai*	"To have loosed for one's self"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λελυμένος	*lelumenos*	"Having loosed for one's self"
Passive Voice				
Indicative	Perfect tense	λέλυμαι	*lelumai*	"I have been loosed"
	Pluperfect tense	ἐλελύμην	*elelumēn*	"I had been loosed"
Indicative	Perfect (Future) tense	λελύσομαι	*lelusomai*	"I shall have been loosed"
Infinitive	Perfect (Future)	λελύσεσθαι	*lelusesthai*	"To have been loosed"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λελυσόμενος	*lelusomenos*	"Having had been loosed"

GREEK VERB SYSTEM: FUTURE

Active Voice				
Indicative	Future tense	λύσω	*lusō*	"I shall loose"
Infinitive	(all inclusive)	λύσειν	*lusein*	"To be about/prepared to loose"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λύσων	*lusōn*	"about to loose"
Middle Voice				
Indicative	Future tense	λύσομαι	*lusomai*	"I shall loose for myself"
Infinitive	(all inclusive)	λύσεσθαι	*lusesthai*	"To be about/prepared to loose for one's self"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λῡσόμενος	*lusomenos*	"about to loose for one's self"
Passive Voice				
Indicative	Future tense	λυθήσομαι	*luthēsomai*	"I shall be loosed"
Infinitive	(all inclusive)	λυθήσεσθαι	*luthēsesthai*	"To be about/prepared to be loosed"
Participle	(verbal noun or adjective)	λυθησόμενος	*luthēsomenos*	"about to be loosed"

Oak

"Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks." *Amos 2:9*

Among the three species of oak trees found in Israel, the common evergreen oak and the Tabor oak are most impressive. These mighty trees are fitting symbols of power and longevity, majesty and splendor. The Tabor oak, for example, may live three to five centuries and attain a height of eighty feet with a crown circumference of sixty-five feet.

Billy Sunday and the Bible

"Twenty-four years ago, with the Holy Spirit as my guide, I entered at the portico of Genesis and walked down the art gallery of the Old Testament, where on the wall hung the pictures of Enoch, Noah, Jacob, Abraham, Elijah, David, Daniel and other famous prophets of old. Then I passed into the music room of the Psalms where the Spirit swept the key-board of my nature and brought forth melody from the dirge-like wail, like that of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, to the grand, exultant strains of the twenty-fourth Psalm; and where every reed and pipe in God's great organ of nature seemed to respond to the tuneful harp of David, the sweet singer of Israel who played for King Saul in his melancholy moods. Next I passed into the business office of Proverbs, then into the chapel of Ecclesiastes, where the voice of the preacher was heard; then over into the conservatory of the Song of Songs, where the lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon, with their full-scented spices, filled and perfumed my life. Then I stepped into the prophetic room and saw the telescopes of various sizes, some pointing to far-off stars or events, and others to near-by stars, but all concentrated upon the Bright and Morning Star, which was to rise above the moonlit hills of Judea for our salvation—while the shepherds guarded their flocks by night. From there I passed into the audience room and caught a vision of the King's glory from the standpoints of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Then into the Acts, where the Holy Spirit was doing His work in the formation of the infant Church. From there I went into the correspondence room where John, Paul, Peter, James and Jude sat at their desks penning their epistles to the Church. And last, I stepped into the throne room of the Revelation, where all towered into glittering peaks, and I got a vision of the King sitting upon His throne in all His glory. Then I bowed my head and said,

'All hail the power of Jesus' Name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.' "

Quoted in William B. Gamble, *Benedicte's Scrapbook* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 23.

LESSON 9

The Study and Interpretation of the Bible

A. Principles of Bible study

We have the wonderful privilege as Christians of being able to understand the Scriptures. This is possible because we have the Holy Spirit as our teacher. We call this **illumination.** It is the **indwelling Holy Spirit giving the Christian the ability to understand the Scriptures.** This truth is clearly taught in God's Word.

"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father." *Matt. 16:17*

"Howbeit when he, the **Spirit** of truth is come, he **will guide you into all truth."** *John 16:13*

"But the natural [unsaved] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned."** *1 Cor. 2:14*

Important Definitions

Revelation—God's **disclosing** to man things about Himself that man could not know otherwise.

Inspiration—God's unique **"breathing"** of His words into the human writers of Scripture.

Illumination—God's **teaching** the Christian the truths of His Word.

Although we have the Holy Spirit as our teacher, He cannot guide us if we do not read God's Word. The Bible is simple enough so **all** Christians can understand it. Theologians refer to the **perspicuity** [pûr′spĭ·kū′i·tĭ] of Scripture, that is, the fact that it is easily understood. Since God gave the Bible to us, it would be worthwhile to learn some principles of Bible study.

1. Be persistent in Bible study.

The greatest difficulty for the average Christian in his Bible study is simply faithfulness. One day he may read twenty

chapters, and the next day he will not read any chapters. It is no wonder he lives a defeated life. Someone has compared Bible reading to the Old Testament manna. The Christian must gather enough for each day. One cannot "stockpile" his devotions for several days and hope to survive spiritually. He must learn daily to come to God's Word for spiritual nourishment.

There will be days when we will not feel like reading God's Word. At other times the reading will appear dull and uninteresting. The greatest of Christians have gone through times when their Bible reading was not a joyous experience. It was then they learned the lesson of persistence and soon the joy of Bible reading returned.

We are commanded to faithfully read God's Word. Our desire to read or not to read should not affect our regular devotions.

> "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." *Josh. 1:8*

The word *meditate* is an interesting word. It means to muse or to ponder, but the **intensity of that meditation** is what is stressed in Joshua 1:8. The same word in the Hebrew is found in several other places in the Old Testament.

> "They that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and **imagine** deceits all the day long." *Ps. 38:12*

> "For their heart **studieth** destruction, and their lips talk of mischief." *Pr[illegible]*

The word is compared to an enemy who spends every waking moment plotting his next attack. The stress is on that enemy's attitude. He is obsessed with vengeance. Similarly, God is commanding Joshua to become **obsessed with the Word of God.** The result will be a "prosperous way" (satisfactory accomplishment of all intended) and success (insight into the way God thinks).

2. Make it personal.

Each Christian must find a method of Bible study that works best for him. Often we try a pattern that worked for someone else, but we find it doesn't work for us. One man said he read God's Word until his heart burned within him (Luke 24:32). Someone else always reads the same number of chapters each

day. Another reads through his Bible every year. Still another said he reads until he **wants** to read some more. Often those reading through the Bible become discouraged once they finish the easily read narratives. Find a plan that works best for you. **Everyone who is successful at personal Bible study has a plan.**

Martin Luther said, "I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf."

At a normal rate of reading it will take the average Christian 3 hours to read the Gospel of Luke, 4 1/2 hours to read the book of Psalms, 52 hours to read the Old Testament, 19 hours to read the New Testament, and less than 72 hours to read the entire Bible.

3. Let it purify you.

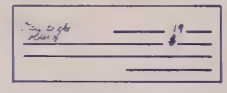
It seems that occasionally the reading of Scripture does not result in a specific blessing to the reader. Has anything been accomplished? Many of God's great truths will become a part of our lives without our realizing it. The Bible has the wonderful ability to cleanse our minds and motivate us to think like God Himself. Just as water does not need to be retained in order to cleanse, so the Word of God does not need to be completely retained in order to cleanse our minds of wrong thinking. (Ps. 119:9; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26)

How to
Read the Bible

Read the Bible, not as a newspaper, but as a home letter.

If a cluster of heavenly fruit hangs within reach, gather it.

If a promise lies upon the page as a blank check, cash it.



If a prayer is recorded, appropriate it, and launch it as a feathered arrow from the bow of your desire.

If an example of holiness gleams before you, ask God to do as much for you.

If the truth is revealed in all its intrinsic splendor, entreat that its brilliance may ever irradiate the hemisphere of your life.

—F. B. Meyer

B. Principles of Bible interpretation

As we study God's Word, it is important to understand some basic principles of interpretation. These principles will keep us from the foolish mistakes of false religions which twist the Scripture "unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). Sincere Bible students have formulated six principles to aid us in "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Some of these principles may require the study of Bible commentaries and other sources of information about the Bible. But remember that **the Bible is the best commentary on the Bible.** Whereas we can appreciate the work of godly men who dedicated their lives to the study of God's Word, these principles are designed to be used by anyone who daily reads God's Word on his own.

1. Literal principle

a. The literal principle teaches that the words of Scripture should be interpreted in a normal, natural, proper way.

Because the Bible is God's message to mankind, it should not be looked upon in some mystical way. The Bible follows basic literary patterns of interpretation. A verb is still a verb and a noun is still a noun. We should not try to figure out special codes hidden in the letters and spellings of the Biblical language. In this sense the Bible is to be viewed as any other book. It is to be interpreted according to the normal rules of grammar, interpreted as literature.

The narratives of Scripture are events which actually took place. They are not fables used to teach some higher "moral" or "spiritual" truth. If the Bible says a great fish swallowed Jonah, then that is exactly what it means. If the Bible says Jesus fed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fishes, we take it at its word.

b. The literal principle does not reject the Bible's use of figurative language.

We realize that any good literature makes abundant use of similes, metaphors, and other figures of speech. But we should never interpret the Bible figuratively unless the Bible clearly indicates the use of non-literal language.

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense." —David L. Cooper

Jesus Christ said on one occasion, "I am the door." We understand that He was not saying He was a literal door. We accept the fact that this passage should be interpreted "normally" as a picture of what Christ is in salvation: the only "way" to heaven. A good question to ask as you read the Bible is this:

If I were reading this passage for the first time without any preconceived ideas, what does this passage seem to be saying?

Further examples of figurative language that **are indicated as such** are found in the book of Revelation:

> "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And Power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." *Rev. 6:8*

Since Death and Hell cannot actually ride horses, we must conclude that this is figurative language. An excellent rule of interpretation is this: **If the literal, normal interpretation of a Bible passage makes good sense, then it is to be taken literally; if the literal does not make good sense, then it is probably symbolic or figurative.**

> "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." *Rev. 1:16*

The "stars" cannot actually be stars because the **context** tells us differently. Verse 20 explains that the "stars" are "angels of the seven churches." **The Bible will often explain its own symbolism.**

> "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." *Rev. 13:3*

> "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." *Rev. 15:2*

Phrases such as "as it were" allow us to assume the expression is **like something else** and can be interpreted figuratively. But unless the Bible explicitly gives us that right we should not become guilty of interpreting all passages in a figurative, symbolic sense.

Luckydipping

We need to beware of twisting the literal meaning of Scripture to relate to our particular circumstances. R. C. Sproul calls this "luckydipping."

> " 'Luckydipping' refers to the method of Bible study in which a person prays for divine guidance and then lets the Bible fall open to wherever it happens to open. Then, with eyes shut the person 'dips' his finger to the page and gets his answer from God wherever the finger lands on the page. I remember one Christian girl who came to me in a state of ecstasy in her senior year of college. She was experiencing the throes of 'senior panic' as she was nearing graduation with no prospect of marriage in sight. She had been praying diligently for a husband and finally resorted to luckydipping for an answer from God. With this method her finger came to rest on Zechariah 9:9:
>
> > 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.'
>
> With this direct word from God, the girl was sure that she was headed for the marriage altar and that her prince was on the way. Maybe he wasn't coming on a big white horse, but a donkey was close enough.
>
> This is not a sound way to use the Bible. I don't think that either Zechariah or the Holy Ghost had this in mind when the words were penned."
>
> —R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), pp. 64–65.

2. Historical principle

We must be careful to view a passage in its original cultural and historical setting. The more we understand the times of the Bible characters the better we will be able to rightly divide the Word of God.

A good illustration of this is Christ's admonition to his disciples in Luke 10:3–4:

> "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way."

If a person does not understand the culture of Christ's day, he may conclude that this last command ("salute no man") would result in a very rude group of soulwinners. But anyone who has traveled in the countries of Central and South America could explain what Christ meant. "Saluting" is far more than simply saying hello to someone as they pass by. It was an elaborate form of greeting which often involved sitting down with an individual, asking about the welfare of each member of his family and discussing what might appear to an American as "small talk." It is not unusual in these countries for "saluting" to last more than an hour. Christ knew these seventy disciples would not have time to spend an hour with each person they met if they were going to preach to hundreds.

3. Contextual principle

A passage can be correctly interpreted by the correct understanding of the context in which it is found. This includes Old or New Testament, the book itself, the chapter, and the verses before and after the given passage.

One passage that is occasionally taken out of context is found in Matthew 10:19:

> "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak."

Some preachers have used this passage to justify their lack of sermon preparation. They believe God will give them the message as they stand to speak. But the context reveals that God is giving instructions to those who are brought before "the councils" and the "synagogues." God's promise was for those who were being persecuted not preachers preparing for Sunday.

Without regard to the context of Scripture it is even possible to say that the Bible teaches "there is no God." But **in context** the Scripture says:

> **"The fool hath said in his heart,** There is no God."
> *Ps. 14:1*

4. Grammatical principle

A passage cannot be fully understood unless the grammar of that passage is understood. Although some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek may be helpful, the grammatical principle also applies to the English syntax.

A verse that shows the importance of the grammatical method is 1 John 5:18, "We know that whosoever is born of God **sinneth** not."

This verse, however, seems to contradict a verse found earlier in the same epistle, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:10).

This problem can be reconciled by the grammatical principle. The **present tense of the verb (sinneth)** in 1 John 5:18 indicates a **continual or habitual action.** It would be perfectly acceptable to interpret the passage to read, "We know that whosoever is born of God doth not habitually commit the same sin." A true Christian cannot continually live in sin without being chastised by his heavenly Father.

5. Synthetical principle

We must always interpret a verse of Scripture in the light of other passages of Scripture. The obscure passage should always be interpreted in the light of clear passages dealing with the same subject. It should be obvious that a verse that seems to teach that salvation is by works should be considered in the light of many verses that indicate salvation is by grace.

The cults have become masters of taking one verse out of context and making it a pretext for false doctrine. It is never good Biblical exposition to base any doctrine on one isolated verse. When we do, we begin to interpret the Bible in a highly subjective manner.

6. Practical principle

We must ask ourselves the question: "What does this passage mean to me today?" We must view the Bible as more than an account of what God has done in the past. We need to ask the Lord daily to speak to our hearts through His Word.

With these six principles in mind the student of God's Word will not be guilty of misinterpreting Scripture.

"For we are not as many, which **corrupt the word of God:** but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." *2 Cor. 2:17*

"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, **nor handling the word of God deceitfully."** *2 Cor. 4:2*

Owl

"And these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls . . . the owl . . . and the little owl . . . and the great owl."

Lev. 11:13, 16, 17

Three groups of owls inhabit Palestine—the eagle owl, several medium-sized owls, and the little owl—and all are considered unclean and unfit to eat under Biblical Law. The eagle owl is the world's largest owl; a beautiful pale variety inhabits the desert country to the south of Palestine. The medium-sized owls include the short-eared, long-eared, tawny, and barn owls.

Principles of Biblical Interpretation

Dr. R. A. Torrey, for many years the associate to the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody, was one of the great Christian leaders of his era. He wrote many books regarding the fundamentals of the Christian faith. He listed the following principles for understanding the Bible.

Paul warns against, "handling the Word of God deceitfully (dishonestly)," 2 Corinthians 4:2. He further commands us in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "rightly divide" the Word of God. This is critical for proper interpretation.

1. Get absolutely right with God yourself by the absolute surrender of your will to Him.
2. Be determined to find out just what God intended to teach and not what you wish Him to teach.
3. Get the most accurate text.
4. Find the most exact and literal meaning of the text.
5. Note the exact force of each word used.
6. Interpret the words used in any verse according to Bible usage.
7. Interpret the words of each author in the Bible with a regard to the particular usage of that author.
8. Interpret individual verses with a regard to the context.
9. Interpret individual passages in the light of parallel or related passages.
10. Interpret obscure passages in the light of passages that are perfectly plain.
11. Interpret any passage in the Bible as those who were addressed would have understood it.
12. Interpret what belongs to the Christian as belonging to the Christian; what belongs to the Jew, as belonging to the Jew; and what belongs to the Gentiles, as belonging to the Gentiles.
13. Interpret each writer with a view to the opinions the writer opposed.
14. Interpret poetry as poetry and interpret prose as prose.
15. The Holy Spirit is the best interpreter of the Bible.

—from R. A. Torrey, *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), pp. 55–90.

How to Deal with Bible Difficulties

Although there is much of the Bible we can understand, there will still be sections that will cause difficulty. We may find Scripture that is still confusing to us, or someone may point out some **alleged** contradiction. We can still have faith in a perfect book. God has allowed these difficulties to remain in His Word in order to supply targets for the ungodly arrows of the hardened skeptic. Because of the skeptics of the first century, Jesus spoke in parables (Matt. 13:13–15). Parables not only revealed truth to the tender-hearted believer but also concealed truth from the hardened unbeliever. Scriptural difficulties are simply mysteries to be revealed only to the diligent, receptive student of God's Word.

I. Approach the Bible with complete confidence in the Author.

A. Trust in the fact that since God wrote it, it speaks the truth.

B. Put your trust in the Author instead of your logic and reason.

II. Realize that you will not understand all of the Bible (Romans 11:33–36).

> "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." *Isa. 55:8, 9*

A. When you take the infinite mind of God and bring it down to the finite mind of man, you will have difficulties.

B. God enjoys hiding some things from us. If we could understand it all, we would be gods.

III. Remember, there are those who want to destroy your confidence in the Bible.

A. Find out the motive of the one bringing up the difficulty.

B. You are wasting your time trying to solve a problem with someone who does not sincerely want to know the truth.

IV. Remember that a difficulty in understanding a doctrine or a grave objection to a doctrine, does not in any way prove the doctrine to be untrue.

A. You must weigh all the Scriptures together.

B. What does the major book on that subject (or doctrine) say? Examples are:

1. Salvation—Romans
2. Pastoral requirements—1 and 2 Timothy
3. Joy—Philippians
4. Leadership—Nehemiah
5. Miracles of Christ—Gospels

C. Remember that because you do not know the answer to a Bible difficulty does not mean there is not an answer.

> "He is a shallow thinker who gives up on a truth because there are some apparent facts he cannot reconcile."

V. Take an offensive approach.

A. You do not always have to prove your difficulties; try to disprove your beliefs.

B. We do not always have to "defend" the faith. Let someone else prove their assertions.

VI. Difficulties are usually minimal compared to the weight of proof.

A. The many proofs of it will help you in the few difficulties **you** cannot seem to reconcile.

B. Do not follow the skeptics in spending more time on difficulties than on truths.

VII. Difficulties rapidly disappear upon careful and prayerful study.

A. The more we pray and truly study, the fewer difficulties we will find (James 1:5).

B. Most of our difficulties occur from our biased opinions rather than studying what the Scriptures say.

This Book contains:

The mind of God,
The state of man,
The way of salvation,
The doom of sinners,
And the happiness of believers.

It is a traveler's map,
The pilgrim's staff,
The pilot's compass,
The soldier's sword,
And the Christian's charter.

Read it to be wise,
Believe it to be safe,
Practice it to be holy.
It contains light to direct you,
Food to support you,
Comfort to cheer you.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully.
It is a mine of wealth,
A paradise of glory,
And a river of pleasure.

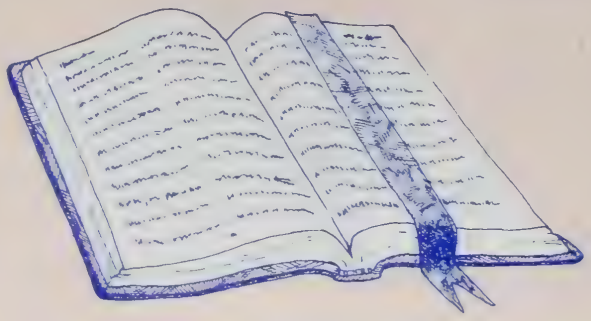
It involves the highest responsibility,
Rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who
Trifle with its Holy contents.

—Selected

Read Your Bible

- Slowly, with mind alert.
- Carefully and with prayer.
- Expectantly and with anticipation.
- In a spirit of enjoyment.
- Eager to respond inwardly.
- Seeking a personal message.
- Repeating aloud verses which strike fire.
- Keeping a definite time each day for reading.
- Copying out a key verse to carry with you for re-reading through the day.

—Selected



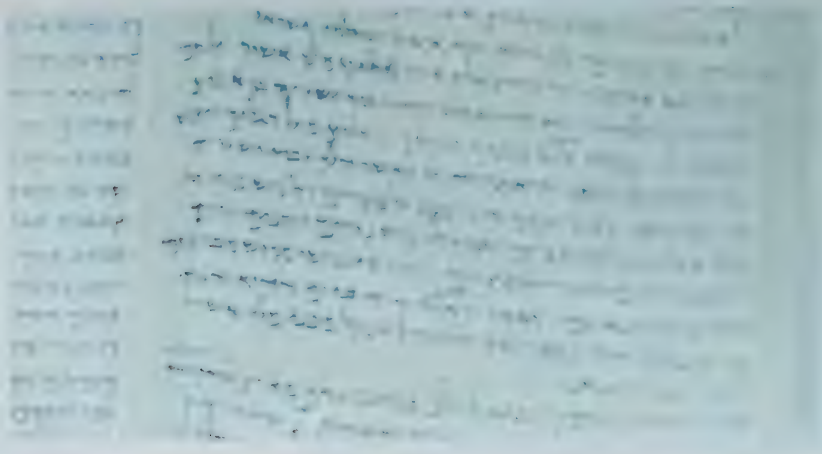
The Preservation of God's Word

God gave His Word through 40 different men over 1500 years in 3 different languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. God preserved the Bible down through the centuries through dedicated copyists who meticulously copied it by hand. God's Word was preserved both in manuscript form and in the early commentaries on the Bible. Further, the Bible was preserved through its translation into the languages of the common people. Thus today people over much of the globe have the wonderful privilege of reading with understanding God's Word to mankind.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, *100 B.C.*

In 1947, one of the first scrolls to be discovered in the **Qumran caves near the Dead Sea** was a complete scroll of Isaiah. It is approximately one foot wide and twenty-four feet in length. Even though it is older than the medieval manuscript of Isaiah by one thousand years, a comparison of these two ancient manuscripts reveals the accuracy with which God's Word was copied during those one thousand years.

The photographs on this page are of a reproduction of the original Isaiah scroll, accurately reproduced to the last hole and tear. The manuscript was written in columns without any of our modern chapter or verse divisions. The Isaiah scroll has been dated at about 100 B.C.



are from the Biblical Archives of Pensacola Christian College

The Gutenberg Bible, A.D. 1456
(*Latin Vulgate*)

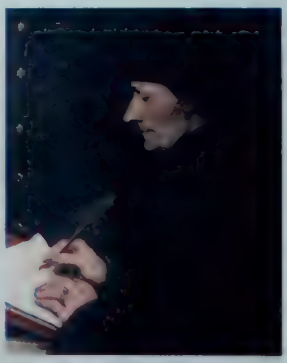
"God suffers because there are such multitudes of souls to whom His sacred Word cannot be given. Religious truth is captive in a small number of little manuscripts, which guard the common treasures instead of expanding them. Let us break the seal which binds these holy things; let us give wings to truth that it may fly with the Word, no longer prepared at vast expense, but multitudes everlastingly by a machine which never wearies—to every soul which enters life!"

—Johann Gutenberg, c. 1400–1468

The Granger Collection, New York

When **Johann Gutenberg** invented his movable-type printing press, he determined it would be used to produce Bibles for the masses. In 1456, he produced **the first printed edition of the Bible.** This book, one of the first books to be printed in Europe, is often called the Gutenberg Bible. All of the ornate letters had to be initially crafted by hand and then arranged in the proper order for printing.

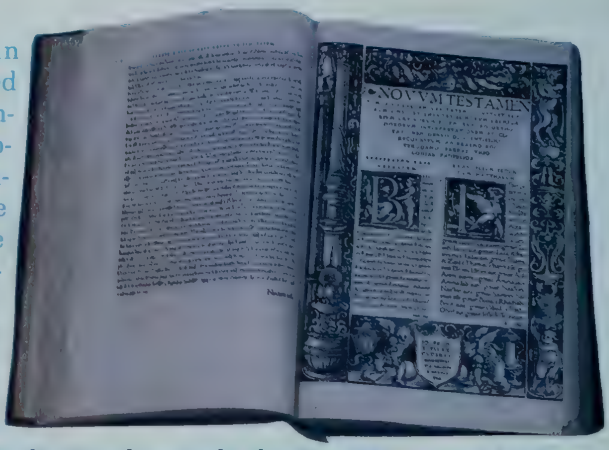
Erasmus' Greek Text of the New Testament, *1516* (*Textus Receptus*)



The Granger Collection, New York

"These holy pages will summon up the living image of His mind. They will give you Christ Himself, talking, healing, dying, rising, the whole Christ in a word; they will give Him to you in an intimacy so close that He would be less visible to you if He stood before your very eyes."

—Erasmus

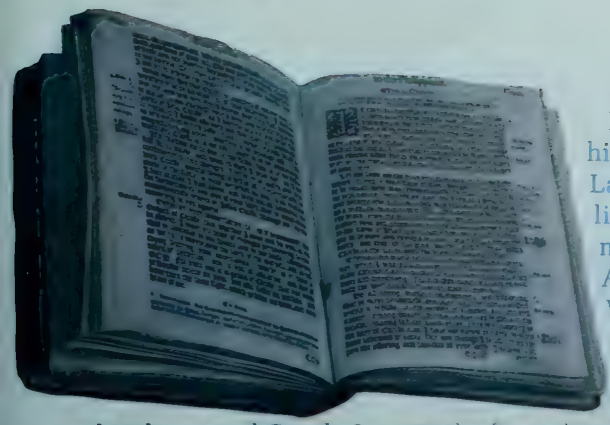


The great European scholar **Erasmus** believed one of his greatest accomplishments to be his publishing of the New Testament in Greek in 1516. He did this by studying the best manuscripts available of the different New Testament books and printing them in one volume. **His goal was to make it as easy as possible for the student of God's Word to study the New Testament in the original Greek language.** In his second edition of 1519 (pictured above), he included two parallel columns on each page, the left in Greek and the right in Latin.

William Tyndale's New Testament, *1526*

"If God spare my life ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou doest."

—William Tyndale
(to one of his critics)



In 1382, **John Wycliffe** and his followers translated the Latin Vulgate into the English language and made many copies of it by hand. About 150 years later, **William Tyndale** desired to give the English-speaking people a **printed** Bible **translated from the original Hebrew and Greek.** In 1526 the first edition of his English New Testament was printed, **based largely on the Greek text of Erasmus** (*Textus Receptus*). **Tyndale was burned at the stake for his work in translating the Scriptures into the common language of the English people.**

It has been estimated that as much as 90 percent of our present English Bible was the work of William Tyndale. This similarity is especially obvious in Philippians 2:9–11 of this 1566 edition of Tyndale's New Testament.

*"Wherefore, God hath exalted hym, and geven hym a name above all names: that in the name of Jesus, should every knee bowe, both of thinges in heaven, and thinges in earth, and thinges under the earth, and that all tongues shoulde confesse, that Jesus Christe is the Lorde, **unto the prayse of God the father.**"*

The Matthews Bible, *1537*

Thomas Matthews was a pseudonym for John Rogers, a personal friend of William Tyndale. The Matthews Bible is basically Tyndale's New Testament and the half of the Old Testament Tyndale was able to finish before he was martyred in 1536. With a knowledge of Tyndale's preparation for the remainder of the Old Testament and a version translated by **Miles Coverdale,** Rogers was able to complete his Bible in 1537.

The Great Bible, *1539 (1566)*

Miles Coverdale superintended the printing of the Great Bible of 1539, which was so named because of its volume and elegance. King Henry VIII ordered copies of this Bible to be chained to the pulpits of all the churches in England. People would gather around the pulpits every day to hear the reading of God's Word. The Bible became so popular that people spent more time reading and discussing it than working. As a result, regulations were passed to limit its discussion. This 1566 edition shows Queen Elizabeth I on the title page.

The Geneva Bible, *1560*

"Here is the spring where waters flowe,
to quench our heate of sinne:
Here is the tree where trueth doth growe,
to leade our lives therein:

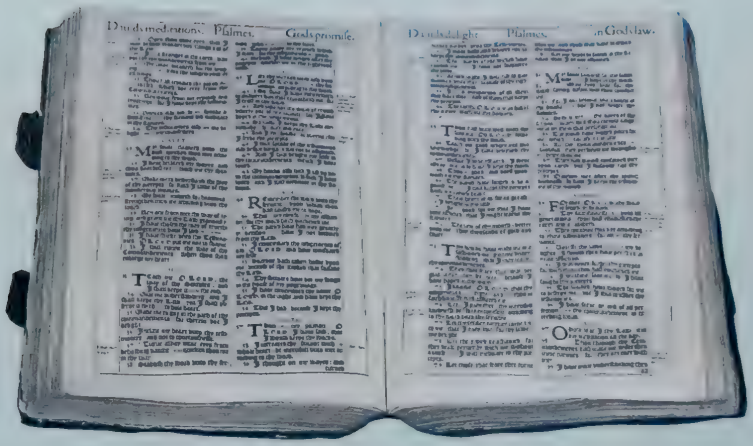
"The tidings of salvation deare,
comes to our eares from hence:
The fortresse of our faith is here,
and shield of our defence."

—from the preface to the 1583 edition of the Geneva Bible

The Bible used by William Shakespeare, John Bunyan and the Puritans was the Geneva Bible of 1560. When the Pilgrims sailed to America, the Geneva Bible was their most prized possession.

The small size of the first edition of the Geneva Bible made it very popular with the people. It was easily carried, and its yellow paper made it easy to read by candlelight. The Geneva Bible was also one of the first to use verse divisions within the chapters.

Authorized Version, *1611*
(King James Bible)

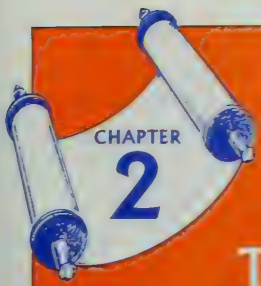


In 1604, King James VI appointed six groups of men, scholars in the original languages and masters of literary style, to make a new translation of the Bible into English from the original Hebrew and Greek. "Fearing no reproach for slowness," they completed their work in 1611. The King James Version has been used by English-speaking missionaries to take the gospel around the globe and has never been excelled in language and style.

The Bible to the World

Since 1611, and especially in the twentieth century, many translations of the Bible have been made into most of the world's languages, as well as numerous versions and paraphrases. Some of these have been more true to the original manuscripts than others.

In 1980, 95.8 percent of the world's peoples had the Scriptures, in whole or in part, in their own language. The Bible, in whole or in part, had been translated into 1,811 distinct languages—148 European languages, 54 within the Soviet Union, 526 in Africa, 457 in Asia, 266 in Oceania, and 360 in the Americas. Of these 1,811 languages, 759 had a complete New Testament and 276 the entire Bible. This contrasts markedly with what was available in 1900, when only 537 languages had Scriptures, in whole or in part. As the nineteenth century was the century of missions, so the twentieth century has been the era of translations.



Theology: The Study of God

The Existence of God

The word *theology* comes from two Greek words, ***theos,*** meaning "God," and ***logos,*** meaning "word" or "doctrine." In a broad sense the word *theology* means the entire study of Bible doctrine, the study of the Creator and His creation. In a more narrow sense it refers to the study of the doctrine of God, His attributes and works. It is in the latter sense that this chapter will study who God is, what God has done in the past, and what He is doing today.

A. Assumptions of God's existence

1. There is a God (Gen. 1:1).

God does not argue for His existence. He expects us to accept the fact that He exists. He simply started His Word with the phrase, "In the beginning God. . . ."

2. God has revealed Himself to man through His Word (Heb. 1:1–3).

We must accept (by faith) that God has given us His Word. Without it we would not know how to be saved nor how to have fellowship with Him as Christians. Apart from God's revelation, man drifts along in a meaningless existence that has no purpose and no goals.

B. Proofs of God's existence

To the one who says, "Prove that there **is** a God," we can reply, "Prove that there is **no** God." To prove that there is no God, one would have to go to every corner of the universe and look under every rock

to show that He is not there. But while that person was looking for God on one planet, God may be on another. Therefore it would be necessary for the individual to be everywhere at the same time. Hence in his desire to prove that there is no God, he himself must possess one of the characteristics of God—omnipresence.

1. Intuition

It is natural for man to believe that there is a God. The abnormal mind is the only kind that cannot accept the fact of God's existence.

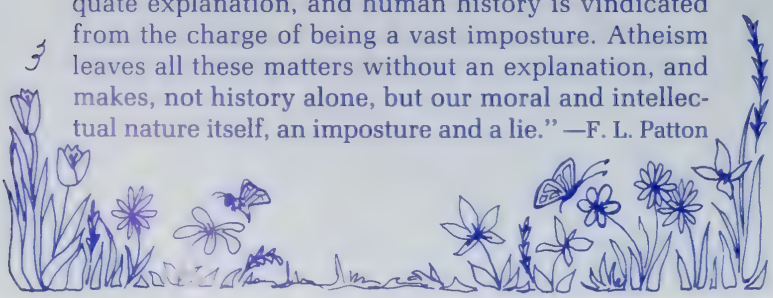
"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." *Ps. 14:1*

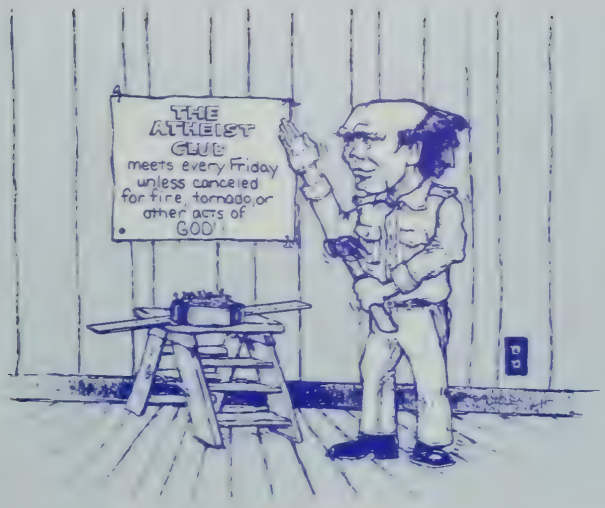
"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." *James 2:19*

"All the evidence points to the conclusive fact that this universal **faith in the existence of God is innate in man, and comes from rational intuition.**" —William Evans

The Existence of God Fits the Facts

"Belief in a self-existent, personal God is in harmony with all the facts of our mental and moral nature, as well as with all the phenomena of the natural world. If God exists, a universal belief in his existence is natural enough; the irresistible impulse to ask for a first cause is accounted for; our religious nature has an object; the uniformity of natural law finds an adequate explanation, and human history is vindicated from the charge of being a vast imposture. Atheism leaves all these matters without an explanation, and makes, not history alone, but our moral and intellectual nature itself, an imposture and a lie." —F. L. Patton





Atheists?

"Concerning so-called atheists in Christian lands: it may be questioned if there are really any such beings. Hume, known as a famous skeptic, is reported to have said to Ferguson, as together they looked up into the starry sky: 'Adam, there is a God.' Voltaire, the atheist, prayed to God in a thunderstorm. Ingersoll, when charged with being an atheist, indignantly refuted the charge, saying: 'I am not an atheist: I do not say that there is no God; I am an agnostic; I do not know that there is a God.' 'I thank God that I am an atheist,' were the opening words of an argument to disprove the existence of God. A new convert to atheism was once heard to say to a coterie [group] of unbelievers: 'I have gotten rid of the idea of a supreme Being, and I thank God for it.' "

—William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1912), p. 15.

2. Tradition

It has been the common characteristic of all peoples throughout history to believe that there is a God and a life after death. History proves that man is basically a religious creature. After a detailed study of some of the remote tribes of Africa, David Livingstone concluded that all people have a conception of God which they have passed on from generation to generation.

Cause and Effect

"The most potent **cause** of the belief was the uniform motion and revolution of the heavens, and the varied groupings and ordered beauty of the sun, moon and stars, the very sight of which was in itself enough to prove that these things are **not the mere effect of chance.** When a man goes into a house, or a wrestling-school, or a public assembly and observes in all that goes on—arrangement, regularity and system—**he cannot possibly suppose that these things come about without a cause:** he realizes that there is someone who presides and controls. Therefore with the vast movements and phases of the heavenly bodies, and these ordered processes of a multitude of enormous masses of matter, which throughout the countless ages of the past have never in the smallest degree played false, is he compelled to infer that these mighty world motions are regulated by some Mind. . . . Now the heavenly bodies and all those things that display a never-ending regularity cannot be created by man; therefore that which creates them is superior to man; yet what better name is there for this than 'god.' "

—Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Bk. 11 Sec. 4ff LC, p. 137ff. [Cicero had no Biblical knowledge.]

3. Reason

By looking around us it seems obvious to us that Someone with intelligence created, ordered, and organized this marvelous universe.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world **are clearly seen,** being understood by the things that are made, even **his eternal power and Godhead.**"

Rom. 1:20

a. Cause and effect

Man's observations of this world confirm a marvelous "effect." His rationale demands a cause. What is the Cause behind all that man can see? Surely it must be an omnipotent Creator.

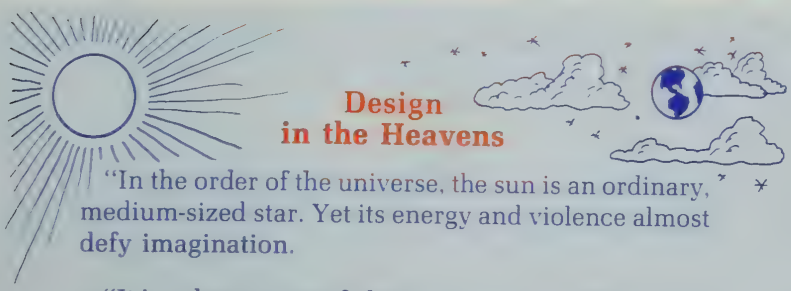
b. Design and Designer

It is extremely doubtful that man will ever be able to create life. But what if God allowed man to have that

privilege? What would it prove? Only that **intelligence** is required to create and order this world. **Design demands a Designer.**

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and **the firmament sheweth his handiwork.**" *Ps. 19:1*

"For every house is builded by some man; but **he that built all things is God.**" *Heb. 3:4*



Design in the Heavens

"In the order of the universe, the sun is an ordinary, medium-sized star. Yet its energy and violence almost defy imagination.

"It is a dense mass of glowing matter, a million times the volume of the earth, and in a permanent state of nuclear activity. Every second, 4 million tons of hydrogen are destroyed in explosions that start somewhere near the core, where the temperature is about 55 million degrees Fahrenheit.

"More energy than man has used since the dawn of civilization is radiated by this normal star in a second.

"The earth's entire oil, coal, and wood reserves would fuel the sun's energy output to the earth alone for only a few days.

"Tongues of hydrogen flame leap from the sun's surface with the force of a billion hydrogen bombs. They are forced up by the enormous thermonuclear explosion at the core of the sun, where 564 million tons of hydrogen fuse each second to form helium. Matter at the core of the sun is so hot that a pinhead of it would give off enough heat to kill a man 100 million miles away.

"The sun . . . is like a vast hydrogen bomb, burning slowly. It is only its vast size that makes its energy output so phenomenal. In fact, its output is about one-fifth that of the human body—in relation to volume."

—*Strange Stories, Amazing Facts* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader's Digest, 1976), p. 14.

"The heat of the sun is so great that a body of solid ice as large as our earth would be melted within two hours if the sun came closer to the earth, and if the earth itself would fall into the sun it would be completely vaporized in a matter of minutes.

"The distance between the earth and the sun is 93,000,000 miles. Astronomers have estimated that if this distance were increased to 120,000,000 miles instead of the 93,000,000, our planet would be a perpetual frozen Arctic, and life on it would be impossible.

"If, on the other hand, this distance were reduced to about 60,000,000 miles, the surface of the earth would be a glowing furnace, again making life on it impossible. But the wonder is that this ball of fire of incalculable heat is exactly 93,000,000 miles away, the exact distance to provide the earth with a balanced amount of heat and light to make life in all its forms possible, and also to divide the earth into climatic zones to make variation in plant and animal life possible. Here again we notice the perfect balance in nature, even among these remote heavenly bodies, and the perfect balance has been maintained with mathematical precision ever since this cosmic machine was set in motion.

"There is no rational explanation for this supreme engineering achievement without a supreme, intelligent, and master Builder."

—Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Wonders of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974) p. 136.

"Can any sane person believe all this array of stars and the vast celestial adornment could have been created out of atoms rushing to and fro fortuitously and at random? Could any other being devoid of intelligence and reason have created them? Not merely did their creation postulate intelligence, but it is impossible to understand their nature without intelligence of a high order. . . .

"If any man is not impressed by this coordination of things and this harmonious combination of nature to secure the preservation of the world I know for certain that he has never given any consideration to these matters."

—Cicero

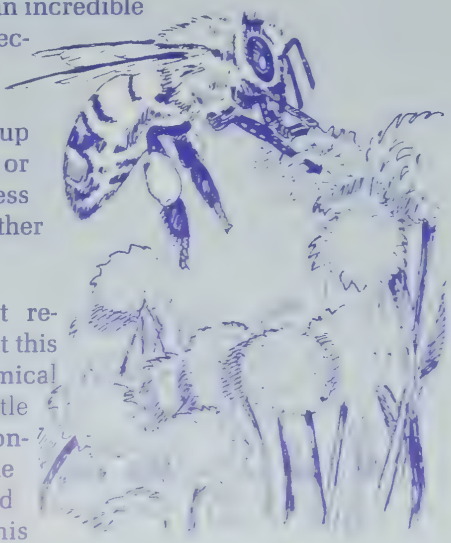
"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Ps. 8:3–4

Design in the Animal Kingdom

"In its structure and anatomy, **the bee** is a most wonderful little creature. Its head is equipped with two multiple eyes, like those of the fly. Besides the eye, it has two rod-like projections on the head which serve as a sense organ for touch and for smell. Each rod is again supplied with countless microscopic sense receptors by which the bee receives the sensory stimuli. Its feet are shod with sharp claws, which enable it to walk over rough surfaces; and in between the claws are attached suction pads which make it possible for it to walk on glass or any smooth surface, or even to hold itself in an upside down position on the ceiling. On its hind legs are attached little basket-like devices in which it carries the pollen gathered from the flowers for food to share with the rest of the colony. But while the bee gathers the pollen for food, it also carries it from flower to flower, and thereby performs a most important service by fertilizing the flower, thus making full development possible.

"The wings of the bees are amazingly efficient and powerful, moving at an incredible speed of 75 beats a second, and they are so constructed that the bee can move either up or down or sideways or even hover motionless over a flower or any other object.



"Perhaps the most remarkable feature about this little insect is the chemical laboratory in its little body, in which it converts into honey the nectar it has gathered from the flowers. This

honey is the sweetest substance in the world. And when we add to this its skill as a builder of the wax cells to store honey and its unique ability to manufacture its own building materials, the wax from which the cells are made, and its uncanny sense of direction which enables it to go far afield to gather nectar, and yet always find its way back in the shortest and straightest line possible, we again are overawed by the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator who designed this little insect and assigned to it its task of producing honey for man's enjoyment."

—Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Wonders of Creation*, pp. 195–196.

"The silk of **the spider** is produced in a specialized gland in its body. Minute ducts called "spinnerets" lead from the gland to the rear part of the spider, to carry its secretion to the surface where, exposed to the air, it becomes a silken thread. These threads are so fine that *no man-made instrument could make them so fine.* But at the same time they are strong, elastic and can stretch like rubber bands. In an experiment it was found that a rope, one inch thick, woven of spider webs was stronger than a rope of the same thickness made of steel wire!"

—Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Wonders of Creation*, p. 199.

Almond

"Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen; for I will hasten my word to perform it."

Jer. 1:11–12

Of the forty species of almond trees, three grow in Israel. The almond, which begins to flower in the first half of February, is the first tree to flower before the end of winter and was thus a fitting symbol of the hastening of events prophesied by Jeremiah. Aaron's rod that budded (Num. 17) was also an almond rod.

Camel

"His substance also was . . . three thousand camels . . . so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east."

Job 1:3

The one-humped Arabian camel, commonly known as the dromedary, has been "the ship of the desert" for Bedouin tribesmen for millennia. The camel's ill-assorted features (which no mere mortal could have conceived) have made it perfectly suited for working along the edge of the desert and for long treks across it. These design features include a thick wool insulation which enables camels to adjust to temperature changes (night on the desert can be quite cool); a concentrated urine that is high in urea and low in water content; a rather constant blood volume that helps camels tolerate dehydration; a relatively slow rate of water loss; and concentration of fat in the humps that permits the radiation of excess heat from the skin. When the Bible lists the wealth of such men as Abraham and Job, their camels are always prominent.

Design in the Human Body

"Engineers have never devised a machine to equal [God's] supreme achievement: the human body. Athletes can sprint at almost 25 miles per hour, throw a ball at more than 100 miles per hour, high jump over seven feet. But even our everyday activities are powered by a system that, in its complexity and efficiency, would make the most sophisticated robot seem inadequate.

"Take the circulatory system. Every minute of our lives the heart pumps 10 pints of blood—30 pints during brisk exercise—through about 60,000 miles of arteries, veins, and capillaries. An adult body contains between 8 and 10 pints of blood: The average for a man is about 10 pints, containing 25 trillion red cells (to carry oxygen) and 25 billion white cells (to fight disease). Some white cells have a life cycle of only 12 hours; red cells have a life of about 120 days.

"The capillaries—tiny tubes servicing the bloodstream—have a total surface area that would cover a 1 1/2-acre field. Not all are opened at once; otherwise all the blood in the body would drain into them within seconds, like floodwater into a swamp. Instead, local chemical changes and nerves to the muscular portion of microscopic blood vessels operate to maintain a cycle of opening and closing every few minutes.

"One part of the body that needs blood all the time is the lungs. Their capillaries continuously take up oxygen from the tiny air sacs of the lungs, while releasing excess carbon dioxide.

. . .

"A baby is born with 305 bones, but some of these fuse together later until there are about 206 (though the number can vary), operated by 650 muscles and more than 100 joints. The tendons anchoring muscle to bone are strong enough to stand a stress of eight tons per square inch, and the thigh bones take a strain of half a ton per square inch while walking.

"All this wonderful complex of [God's creation] is encased in a flexible, waterproof covering,—the skin. The average man has 20 square feet of it, which wears away and is replaced every few weeks. Set in the skin are up to 5 million hairs; each lasts about three years.

"Nine thousand taste buds come to our aid in choosing what we like, aided by millions of nerve cells; 4 million "receptors" in the skin enable us to feel, distinguish hot from cold, and experience pain or comfort."

—*Strange Stories, Amazing Facts* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader's Digest, 1976) pp. 40–41.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" *Ps. 139:14–17*

On Universal Design

"Can it be by accident that all birds, beasts, and men have their right side and left side alike shaped (except in their bowels); and just two eyes, and no more, on either side of the face; and just two ears on either side [of] the head; and a nose with two holes; and either two forelegs or two wings or two arms on the shoulders, and two legs on the hips, and no more? Whence arises this uniformity in all their outward shapes but from the counsel and contrivance of an Author? Whence is it that the eyes of all sorts of living creatures are transparent to the very bottom, and the only transparent members in the body, having on the outside a hard transparent skin and within transparent humors, with a crystalline lens in the middle and a pupil before the lens, all of them so finely shaped and fitted for vision that no artist can mend them? **Did blind chance know that there was light and what was its refraction, and fit the eyes of all creatures after the most curious manner to make use of it?** These and suchlike considerations always have and ever will prevail with mankind to believe that there is a Being who made all things and has all things in his power, and who is therefore to be feared. . . ."

—Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), from *Newton's Philosophy of Nature: Selections from His Writings*, H. S. Thayer, ed. (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1953).

A Skeptic's Confession

"I would like to introduce you to one of the lonesomest and unhappiest individuals on earth. I am talking about the man who does not believe in God. I can introduce you to such a man because I myself am one, and in introducing myself, you shall have an introduction to the agnostic or skeptic in your own neighborhood, for he is everywhere in the land. You will be surprised to learn that the agnostic envies your faith in God, your settled belief in a heaven after life, and your blessed assurance that you will meet with your loved ones in an afterlife where there will be neither sadness nor pain. He would give anything to be able to embrace that faith and be comforted by it. For him there is only the grave and the persistence of matter. After the grave all he can see is the disintegration of the protoplasm and psychoplasm of which my body and personality are composed. But in this materialist view, I find neither ecstacy nor happiness.

"The agnostic may face life with a smile and a heroic attitude. He may put on a brave front, but he is not happy. He stands in awe and reverence before the vastness and majesty of the universe, knowing not whence he came nor why. He is appalled at the stupendousness of space and the infinitude of time, humiliated by the infinite smallness of himself, cognizant of his own frailty, weakness, and brevity. Certainly he sometimes yearns for a staff on which to lean. He, too, carries a cross. For him, this earth is but a tricky raft adrift in the unfathomable waters of eternity with no horizon in sight. His heart aches for every precious life upon the raft—drifting, drifting, drifting, whither no one knows."

—W. O. Saunders, *American Magazine*, Nov., 1930, quoted by Dr. D. James Kennedy, *Why I Believe* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1980) pp. 47–48.

LESSON 11

How God Reveals Himself

Revelation is God's disclosing to man things about Himself that man could not know otherwise. The revelation of God to mankind is divided into two sections: **general revelation** and **special revelation.** General revelation is God's revelation of Himself in creation, through history, and in a man's conscience. Special revelation is God's revelation in His Word, through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the transformed lives of Christians. Without revelation we would know nothing about God.

A. General revelation

1. Definition

God reveals Himself to all mankind through the glories of His creation and His government of the universe.

How God Makes Himself Known to Us

We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to **perceive clearly the invisible qualities of God,** namely, **His eternal power and deity,** as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20.

—Article 2 of the Belgic Confession of Faith (A.D. 1561)

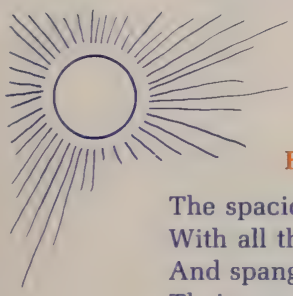
a. General revelation is seen in nature by all men.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." *Ps. 19:1*

"We . . . preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered [allowed] all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did

good, and gave us **rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons,** filling our hearts with food and gladness."
Acts 14:15–17

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world **are clearly seen,** being understood by the things that are made, even his **eternal power** and **Godhead;** so that they are without excuse."
Rom. 1:20



The Spacious Firmament on High

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heav'ns, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
Th' unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to ev'ry land
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And mighty to the list'ning earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What tho' in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball?
What tho' no real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is Divine."

—Joseph Addison, 1712

b. General revelation sees God as Creator and Governor.

The theme of the book of Daniel is the rule of God over all. Each of the Babylonian kings came face to face with this great thought—"God rules over all." Whether these men accepted God's plan of salvation is unclear, but some at least took the first step by accepting general revelation.

(1) Nebuchadnezzar

> "To the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." *Dan. 4:17*

> "The most high ruleth in the kingdom of men." *Dan. 4:25*

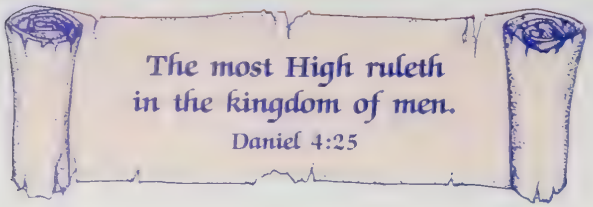
> "And at the end of days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation." *Dan. 4:34*

> "He doeth according to his will . . . and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" *Dan. 4:35*

> "And he [Nebuchadnezzar] was driven from the sons of men . . . till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will." *Dan. 5:21*

(2) Belshazzar

> "The God in whose hand thy [Belshazzar's] breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." (Daniel speaking to Belshazzar in Daniel 5:23)



(3) Darius

> "I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." *Dan. 6:26*

c. General revelation renders sinful man **without excuse.**

> "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are **without excuse.**"
>
> *Rom. 1:20*

d. General revelation is **insufficient** for saving knowledge.

Although general revelation may lead an individual in the **direction** of salvation (like the kings of Babylon), it is still not enough to teach an individual the **way** of salvation.

A good illustration of this truth is the New Testament account of the conversion of Cornelius.

> "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, . . . a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." *Acts 10:1–2*

Cornelius was very religious, very moral, but he was unsaved. He had accepted general revelation, but he needed the truth of the gospel presented by God's man. God appeared to Simon Peter by means of a vision. Peter was instructed to give the gospel to Cornelius. Cornelius could not be saved until he was able to "hear words" from Peter. Yet when he heard the gospel, he immediately accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

Many people are open to the gospel message and are waiting to hear the "good news" of salvation. Jesus said that the fields are white unto harvest but the laborers are few. The Lord seems to have more trouble getting His children to fulfill the Great Commission than He has in opening the hearts of the unsaved.

2. Need for general revelation

a. It saves the world from chaos and cruelty.

God has provided **three channels of general revelation** for mankind. They are:

(1) Nature (Ps. 8:3–5; 19:1–6; Acts 14:15–17; Rom. 1:19–25)

> "When I consider thy heavens, **the work of thy fingers,** the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" *Ps. 8:3–4*

(2) Conscience (Rom. 2:14–15)

> "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their **conscience** also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." *Rom. 2:14–15*

(3) History (Deut. 28; Prov. 14:34)

> "The Lord shall establish thee [the Hebrew nation] an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways. And **all people of the earth shall see** that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." *Deut. 28:9–10, 15, 37*

> "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." *Prov. 14:34*

It is through these three channels that God gives to man some sense of morality. The world system

realizes that sin needs to be punished. It also understands that order is necessary for a nation or society to survive. Although morality will not save anyone, it does keep a nation from total chaos. General revelation is helpful, but it is still insufficient for salvation.

b. It supports and illustrates special revelation (God's Word).

The glories of God's creation are constant reminders of a Supreme Being. The design of this universe demands that reasoning man recognize a Designer. The wonders of the human body cannot be explained apart from God. We would expect that a God that is powerful and wonderful enough to create all things would communicate with His creation; therefore **general revelation encourages man to seek special revelation.**

General revelation and special revelation are like God's two "books," His outdoor book (creation) and His indoor Book (the Bible). His outdoor book can be read by all; if it does not lead people to Him, they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Sometimes God's outdoor book leads men to seek after God. God promises to reward the one who diligently seeks Him (Heb. 11:6). He will see to it that true seekers are given the truth revealed in His indoor Book, the Bible. If a man is willing to accept the truth of God's outdoor book, God will see to it that he finds the truth of God's indoor Book, the Bible.

This universe and its laws also **illustrate** truths that we see in God's Word. The unending universe is a physical illustration of eternity. The world of science is filled with paradoxes. The physicist indicates that there are two mutually exclusive theories of light. Although it appears that they cannot both be true, yet they are. This paradox is an illustration of God's revelation.

> "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." *Isa. 55:8–9*

Charles Spurgeon, called by many the Prince of Preachers, once said when asked to reconcile two paradoxical truths of Scripture: "They need no recon-

ciliation, for they never fell out. Why should I reconcile two friends? Prove to me that the two truths do not agree. These two facts are parallel lines; I cannot make them unite, but you cannot make them cross each other. Permit me also to add that I have long ago given up the idea of making all my beliefs into a system. I believe, but I cannot explain. **I fall before the majesty of revelation, and adore the infinite Lord."**

B. Special revelation

1. Definition

Special revelation is the act of God whereby He reveals Himself and His truth to specific people at specific times and places. Yet the revelation was not for those people alone; God revealed Himself to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, and yet what they learned of God has been recorded for all ages.

a. Special revelation **cannot be learned on one's own.**

The unsaved man cannot appreciate God's revelation as seen in God's Word. He is considered a "natural man" by God.

> "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned [understood]." *1 Cor. 2:14*

Apart from the Holy Spirit, an individual will never understand the Bible. Therefore, it is useless to argue with someone about Bible doctrine. The Christian and the unsaved have no common ground. Not until an unsaved individual accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior will he begin to understand God's special revelation. At that moment the Holy Spirit becomes his Teacher.

b. Special revelation is **accepted by faith.**

> "So then **faith cometh** by hearing, and hearing by **the Word of God.**" *Rom. 10:17*

Although reason can tell a man there must be a God, faith is required for salvation. The only way an individual can understand what Jesus Christ has done is through God's Word. Faith is always determined by its object. If the object of one's faith is man, it is a weak faith,

because man is weak. But if the object of one's faith is Jesus Christ, that faith is strong, because God's Son is all powerful.

c. Special revelation is **sufficient for salvation.**

The Word of God contains the gospel, which is all that is necessary for a person to be saved. The great concern is that so many have not heard the gospel story. Even if a person has accepted general revelation, he must be presented with the claims of the gospel before he can be saved. This was the heart cry of Paul as he wrote Romans 10:13–15.

> "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and **how shall they hear without a preacher?** And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" *Rom. 10:13–15*

Leopard

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." *Jer. 13:23*

The Hebrew word for leopard, (*namer*) includes both the leopard and the cheetah, or hunting leopard. The leopard is a large spotted carnivore, the biggest animal of its family still surviving in the Fertile Crescent. The cheetah is the swiftest land animal, and it is mentioned in Habakkuk 1:8 where it says that the Chaldeans' horses are swifter than a leopard (cheetah).

William Carey is considered the Father of Modern Missions. In 1792 he went before his brethren to plead his cause for worldwide missions. The moderator of the meeting replied: "Sit down, young man. Sit down. When God sees fit to convert the heathen, He'll do it without your help or mine." But Carey believed that God would have him go to India. As a result he built schools and a Bible college in the Danish colony of Serampore, India. From there he sent out his preachers into all of India with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"How shall they hear without a preacher?"

In 1813, the first American missionary, **Adoniram Judson,** began working as a missionary in Burma. In spite of the fact that he did not have one convert for the first six years of his ministry, he would not quit. During the war between England and the Burmese (1824–1826), Adoniram Judson was thrown into a filthy prison. The poor conditions, the heat of the jungle, and a recurring fever almost cost him his life. He was kept alive by his faithful wife. He lived to see that the results of his labors were not in vain as thousands of Burmese turned to Christ.

"How shall they hear without a preacher?"

2. Need for special revelation

a. Man cannot be saved through general revelation alone.

"So then **faith cometh** by hearing, and hearing **by the Word of God.**" *Rom. 10:17*

b. Man cannot fully appreciate general revelation until he accepts special revelation.

The unconverted man's heart is so blinded by sin that he cannot appreciate all that God has done.

"In whom the god of this world hath **blinded the minds** of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." *2 Cor. 4:4*

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their **foolish heart was darkened.**" *Rom. 1:21*

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."
Ps. 14:1

When a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, that person has a new appreciation for God's creation and a better view of himself.

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."
Ps. 8:3–5

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."
Prov. 1:7

Untold Millions

Untold millions are still untold.
Untold millions are outside the fold.
Who will tell them of Jesus' love
And the heav'nly mansions awaiting above?

Jesus died on Calvary to save each one from sin.
Now he calls to you and me to go and bring them in.

Untold millions are still untold.
Untold millions are outside the fold.
Who will tell them of Jesus' love
And the heav'nly mansions awaiting above?

—Franklin F. Ellis

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LESSON 12

The Attributes of God

Attributes are qualities or characteristics of a person or thing. Although general revelation may give us a glimpse of God's attributes (surely the Creator of the universe is omnipotent), it is not until we come to God's Word that we understand the character of God as He has revealed it to us. Special revelation is absolutely necessary in order to understand the Creator.

A. God's natural attributes

1. Defined

Natural attributes are the very nature of God's Being. They are unique to Him and cannot be the characteristics of man either now or in the future. This is sometimes questioned because of 1 John 3:2, "but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be **like him;** for we shall see him as he is." In what sense will we be **like him?** We will be like Jesus in His moral attributes (love, holiness, mercy, etc.). We can never become like Him in His natural attributes (eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, etc.).

2. Described

a. Transcendence (Isa. 57:15)

God is ***above*** His creation.

"the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" *Isa. 57:15*

b. Immanence (Isa. 57:15)

Although God is above all (transcendence), He has seen fit to be actively involved **within** His creation (immanence). The climax of His immanence was His coming to earth as a Baby, living for 33 years on earth, and dying on a cross for man's sins.

"I **dwell** in the high and holy place, **with him also** that is of a contrite and humble spirit." *Isa. 57:15*

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." *Eph. 4:6*

"And he [Jesus Christ] is before all things, and by him all things consist." *Col. 1:17*

Eternal Father

Eternal Father, when to Thee.
Beyond all worlds, by faith I soar,
Before Thy boundless majesty
I stand in silence, and adore.

But, Saviour, Thou art by my side;
Thy voice I hear, Thy face I see:
Thou art my Friend, my daily Guide;
God over all, yet God with me.

And Thou, great Spirit, in my heart
Dost make Thy temple day by day;
The Holy Ghost of God Thou art,
Yet dwellest in this house of clay.

Blest Trinity, in whom alone
All things created move or rest,
High in the heav'ns Thou hast Thy throne;
Thou hast Thy throne within my breast.

—Hervey D. Ganse, 1872

c. Eternity

God has ***no beginning nor ending.*** There is no past, present, nor future with God, only eternal present. He is not limited by time.

"the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" *Isa. 57:15*

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." *Ps. 90:2*

d. Infinity

God has ***no limitation in space.*** All of His attributes are without limit. (See 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 103:17; 139:7–12; 147:5; Isa. 55:8–9; Jer. 23:24.)

e. Immutability

God is not capable of nor susceptible to change; He is ***unchangeable,*** invariable, and permanent (Ps. 102: 24–27; Isa. 46:9–10; James 1:17).

"For I am the Lord, I change not." *Mal. 3:6*

Some have suggested that God does indeed change because of verses like Genesis 6:6, "it repented the Lord that he had made man," and 1 Samuel 15:11, 35, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king." These verses seem to contradict Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." **God's character never changes,** though He may change (repent of) His plan of working with individuals or nations. God consistently deals with individuals and nations on the basis of their response to Him; when man's response changes, then God changes His plan of working with that person or nation.

God's unchanging holiness requires Him to treat the wicked differently from the righteous. When the righteous become wicked, His treatment of them must change. The sun is not fickle nor partial because it melts the wax but hardens the clay; the change is not in the sun but in the objects it shines upon. The change in God's treatment of men is described anthropomorphically (giving God human characteristics), as if it were a change in God Himself, but it is only a change in His plan. Threats not fulfilled, as in Jonah 3:4–10 are explained by their conditional nature. God's love will adapt itself to every varying mood and condition of His children, so as to guide their steps, sympathize with their sorrows, and answer their prayers. God responds to us more quickly than the mother's face to the changing moods of her babe. (Adapted from Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology,* p. 124.)

f. Omniscience (Ps. 139:2; Isa. 40:26; 46:10; Rom. 11:23)

God knows everything He wills to know. This definition is more precise than the typical definition of "all-knowing."

The above definition helps answer several questions:

(1) How could an omniscient Son of God **"learn"** anything?

"And Jesus increased in wisdom."
Luke 2:52

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience." *Heb. 5:8*

The answer is that He "willed" **not** to know something temporarily so He could learn as a normal child. This helped Him understand the "trials" of learning which all of us face.

(2) How can God forget our sins if He is omniscient?

"For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." *Isa. 38:17*

"I will remember their sin no more."
Jer. 31:34

God's omniscience allows Him to "will" not to know something. God will not remember our sins if they have been confessed and placed under the blood of Jesus Christ.

God knows all about you. He made you exactly the way you are. He has given to you all the abilities and talents you need to have to do the job you need to do. He has not given you more abilities than you can use nor has He "short-changed" you by not giving you the abilities that you would like to have. Those who would fear doing God's will often never consider the fact that only an omniscient God could know what's best for them both now and in the future. We can only see today, while God can see what is best for us fifty years in the future. It only makes sense to trust Him with our daily walk as well as our eternal destiny.

g. Omnipresence

God is everywhere He wills to be. He is present in all parts of space, time, and eternity (Ps. 139:7–12). We cannot hide from God: yet it is also comforting to know that He "will never leave [us], nor forsake [us]" (Heb. 13:5).

Perhaps the worst part of Christ's punishment on the cross was God the Father's turning His back on His own Son. Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why hast thou for-

saken me" (Mark 15:34). Likewise the worst part of hell will, no doubt, be the complete absence of God's presence.

"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction **from the presence of the Lord.**" *2 Thess. 1:9*

It has been suggested that if God at any moment were to remove Himself from any place in this universe, that place would instantly become what is described in the Bible as hell, for God's absence creates hell. On the cross Jesus suffered our eternity in hell when God the Father removed His presence. In eternity God, therefore, is simply giving the unsaved what the unsaved demands, "No God for me" (Ps. 14:1). The result is a place totally devoid of God's presence plus the physical torment of fire, as mentioned by the rich man in hell (Luke 16:24). We ought to thank God daily for His **omnipresence.**

h. Omnipotence

God can **do anything** He **wills** to do. God chooses to limit His own power by His own will. God cannot act contrary to His Word and His character. 1 John 5:13–14 indicates that God has limited Himself by His Word and by His will. If God has promised something, He cannot deny Himself; He will carry through with that promise. He cannot change His mind concerning all His wonderful promises. We ought to be thankful for God's Self-imposed limitations.

An illustration of this is found in Genesis 18:25 and 19:22. Abraham reminds God that His character will not allow the destruction of the righteous with the unrighteous. Therefore, God pulls Lot out of doomed Sodom as He explains the limitations He has placed on His omnipotence, "I **cannot do any thing** till thou be come thither."

This also answers the question often posed, "Can God create a rock so big that He cannot move it?" The answer is that God has limited Himself so that He is not concerned with such foolishness. Since His will is limited by His nature, God cannot do anything that is not in harmony with His perfections. (See Ps. 27:1; 33:6, 9; 148:11; Acts 17:28.)

In Colossians 1:17 we are told that it is Christ's omnipotence that holds everything together. All that needs

Peacock

"Every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." *2 Chron. 9:21*

The "ships of Tarshish" were large seagoing vessels. Solomon must have traded with India and the East because the words translated *ivory, apes,* and *peacocks* come from words in Tamil and Sanskrit. Peafowl are the largest Old World game birds and live wild in the jungles of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Solomon's servants probably thought this unusual and beautiful bird would please their master.

to be done for this universe to explode (2 Pet. 3:7–13) is for God to take His hands off. That same power continues to work in our lives (Phil. 1:6) until the day Christ returns.

B. God's moral attributes

1. Definition of moral attributes

God's moral attributes are characteristics of God revealed in His personal interaction with mankind. They include His love, grace, mercy, justice, holiness, righteousness, truth, and goodness. These attributes of God are examples of what should be in every man. Although we can never be like God in His natural attributes (omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, etc.), we should strive to be like Him in His moral attributes.

"Be ye **holy;** for I am holy." *1 Pet. 1:16*

"Beloved, let us **love** one another." *1 John 4:7*

"Do **justly**, and . . . love **mercy.**" *Mic. 6:8*

Someday when we receive our glorified bodies we will be truly "like Him" in His moral attributes.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." *1 John 3:2*

2. Description of God's moral attributes

a. Holiness

Holiness is that perfection of God whereby He abhors that which is evil and demands purity. **God is separated totally from sin and evil** (James 1:13). Because of God's Holiness, a sinful individual has no right to come into His presence. For this reason God had to turn His back on His own Son on Calvary when He "became sin for us, who knew no sin." If we approach God at all, we must come through the merits (or holiness) of Another (Ex. 15:11; Ps. 22:1–3; Matt. 27:46; and Rev. 15:4).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." *Rom. 5:1–2*

We should approach God with reverence and godly fear. He is not merely "the Man upstairs." God is holy. We should not use the "lingo" of the world to praise the Lord or to refer to God. God's holiness deserves more than our using "contemporary" expressions to describe the One Who is above all.

We are commanded to be holy. 1 Peter 1:15–16 says: "But as he which called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy." We need to look upon sin as "exceeding sinful." We need to picture each of our sins as being put upon Jesus Christ as He died on the cross for those sins.

If someone broke into our house and used a knife to kill someone we loved very much, would we cherish the knife? Would we frame it or put it in a trophy case? Of course not. Then we as Christians should not prize or hold on to the very sins that caused Jesus Christ to go to Calvary and die. In a sense our sins killed Jesus Christ; therefore, He is worthy of our hatred of sin.

"Be ye holy; for I am holy." *1 Pet. 1:16*

b. Justice

Justice is the attribute of God by which He carries out the laws that He has imposed. It has two sides. It is **remunerative** (rewarding) and **retributive** (chastising). Since God cannot act contrary to His laws, sin must be punished. A person must suffer for his own sin or else accept God's plan of redemption by which Jesus Christ becomes the sinner's substitute. God is the One Who has been wronged by sin; therefore, He is the only One Who can determine how restitution is made.

Mankind has always attempted to improve on God's plan of salvation; "salvation by faith" seems too simple. But whether it is simple or not, is not the question. God has been "wronged," and therefore He is the One who determines the way back into His graces. It would be folly for an individual to appear in a courtroom and argue concerning the penalty for his crime. A convicted criminal has no right to suggest a fine of $25 for the crime of murder. The penalty to be imposed is the responsibility of the judge. Likewise, a man is a fool if he thinks his way of restitution is better than that of "the Judge of all the earth." Though salvation is simple for the individual, it was costly to the Father, in that He gave His Son's life for our salvation.

We too are commanded to be just.

"Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and **judgment.**" *Hos. 12:6*

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of

thee, but to do **justly,** and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" *Mic. 6:8*

We must always strive to be just in our dealings with others. There should be a balance in our lives even as God has a perfect balance between love and justice.

c. Righteousness

Righteousness is the attribute that causes God to **always do right.** Abraham realized that sin deserves God's punishment, but he also realized that God does not punish the righteous. Abraham, therefore, pleaded for Sodom on the basis of God's righteousness.

"That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the **judge of all the earth do right?**" *Gen. 18:25*

This wonderful attribute of God guarantees that He will always keep His promises. He can do no other. His attribute of righteousness is the reason that men can approach a holy God. Note these verses:

"Thou art the Lord the God, who . . . madest a covenant with him [Abraham] to give the land . . . I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words, for thou art **righteous."** *Neh. 9:7–8*

"O Lord, according to all thy **righteousness,** I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem." *Dan. 9:16*

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the **righteous** judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." *2 Tim. 4:8*

God rewards **righteousness** in the Christian.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after **righteousness:** for they shall be filled." *Matt. 5:6*

"The effectual fervent prayer of a **righteous** man availeth much." *James 5:16*

The philosophy of the world today is "if it feels right, do it." But God's Word demands that we do right because it **is** right. A Christian ought to have godly character. **Godly character is doing what is right regardless of convenience, the circumstances, or the eventual outcome.** Joseph had character in rejecting the offers of Potiphar's wife in spite of the results. Each Christian has that same obligation.

d. Love

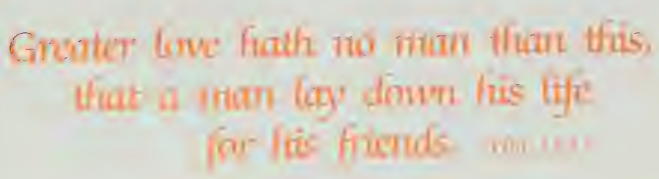
Love is the attribute which moves God to communicate His concern for the ultimate welfare of the ones that He loves. He wants the very best for those He loves. Therefore His love moved Him to sacrifice His life for the sake of another.

"Greater **love** hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." *John 15:13*

"For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." *John 3:16*

"He that **spared not** his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also **freely give** us all things?" *Rom. 8:32*

The world uses the word ***love*** so flippantly that many Christians have a very shallow view of Biblical love. **Love is concern for the welfare of another even above one's own welfare.** The world's idea of love is usually lust. Love is giving; lust is getting. Lust can't wait to get, while love can't wait to give. As Christians, we are commanded to love other Christians (1 John 4:20–21), to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43–44), and to love the Lord (Deut. 6:5). We are to show our love for God by keeping His commandments (John 14:15).



e. Mercy

Mercy is God's compassion for the sinner (Rom. 5:8) in not giving him what he deserves.

> "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he **delighteth in mercy.**" *Mic. 7:18*

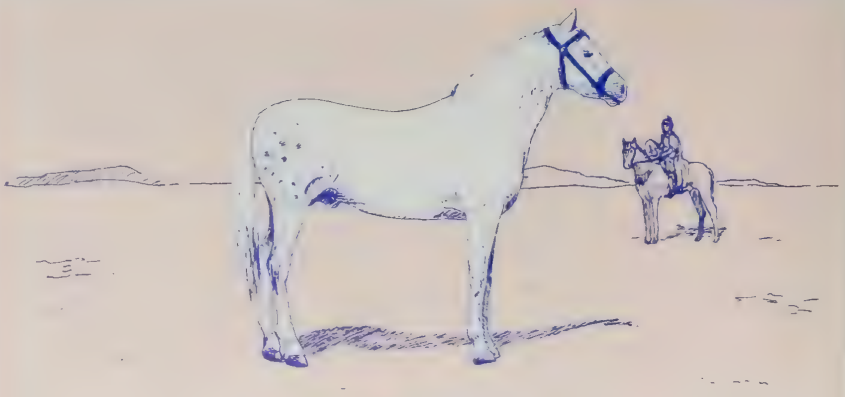
In the Hebrew the word *mercy* comes from the same root as the word for a mother's womb. It is the caring for that which is completely helpless.

> "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to **love mercy,** and to walk humbly with thy God?" *Mic. 6:8*

f. Grace

Grace is the unmerited goodness and love of God for those who have forfeited it (Eph. 1:6–7; 2:7–9; Titus 2:11).

> "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." *Eph. 2:8*



Horse

"And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt." *1 Kings 10:28*

Horses are first mentioned in the Bible in connection with Egypt in Genesis 47:17, and extra-Biblical history records no use of the horse before about 2000 B.C. The horse is an odd-toed, hoofed animal that was prized for centuries for its grace, strength, and beauty as a beast of burden and animal of war.

The LORD is good,
a strong hold in the day of trouble;
and he knoweth them
that trust in him.
Nahum 1:7

Whereas **mercy** is **God's not giving us what we do deserve, grace** is **God's giving us what we do not deserve.**

g. Goodness

This attribute of God is revealed in His bountiful dealing with mankind.

"The Lord is **good** to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." *Ps. 145:9*

"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." *Matt. 5:45*

h. Truth

God cannot lie nor tolerate untruth. God ***could*** commend Rahab's faith (Heb. 11:31; James 2:25), but could not commend her lie (Josh. 2:4).

"God is not man, that he should lie." *Num. 23:19*

"There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." *Josh. 21:45*

"There hath not failed one word of all his good promise." *1 Kings 8:56*

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the **truth,** and the life." *John 14:6*

"Sanctify them through thy **truth:** thy word is **truth.**" *John 17:17*

LESSON 13

The Nature and Names of God

A. The nature of God

1. God is a **Unity.**

The Divine nature is indivisible; there is but one infinite and perfect Spirit. The Jewish nation was constantly exposed to **polytheism** (belief in more than one "god") in Egypt and in Canaan. The people of these nations thought they needed more than one god because one was insufficient. But the idea of two or more gods is self-contradictory because each would limit the other and thereby destroy the omnipotence and **sovereignty** (absolute rule) of both.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is **one** Lord."
Deut. 6:4

The Hebrew language has two different words for *one*. The first is singular, and the other is collective (e.g., *one* bushel of apples). The word for *one* in Deuteronomy 6:4 is the collective *one*. Even in God's unity we begin to get a glimpse of His Trinity.

"That men may know that thou, whose name **alone** is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth." *Ps. 83:18*

"Thou art God **alone.**" *Ps. 86:10*

"Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and **beside me there is no saviour.**" *Isa. 43:10–11*

"I am the first, and I am the last; and **beside me there is no God.** . . . Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any." *Isa. 44:6, 8*

"I am the Lord, and **there is none else, there is no God beside me.** . . . That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that **there is none beside me.** I am the Lord, and **there is none else.**" *Isa. 45:5–6*

"I am the Lord, and **there is none else.**" *Isa. 45:18*

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is **one Lord.**"
Mark 12:29

"We know . . . that there is **none other God but one.**"
1 Cor. 8:4

"For there is **one God,** and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." *1 Tim. 2:5*

2. God is a **Trinity.**

God is one in His essential being, but He exists in three Persons. Each Person of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is fully God.

Some cults cannot accept the idea of the Trinity. Their philosophy is "what I cannot understand, I cannot believe." There are many things that most of us cannot fully explain, but we still believe in them and benefit from them (e.g., electricity, atoms, the human mind, etc.).

a. The Trinity is quietly declared in the **Old Testament.**

(1) In the plural name for God (Gen. 1:1)

One of the Hebrew names for God is ***Elohim.*** It is a compound unity. It is a singular noun with a plural ending. (The *-im* ending in Hebrew is the plural form, as in *cherubim* and *seraphim.*)

(2) In the plural forms of the personal pronouns for God

"And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness." *Gen. 1:26*

"Go to, let **us** go down, and there confound their language." *Gen. 11:7*

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for **us**?" *Isa. 6:8*

(3) In the **Theophanies** (appearances of God in human flesh) (Gen. 22:11–12; Ex. 3:1–15)

(4) In the three-fold Aaronic blessing

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." *Num. 6:24–26*

(5) In the "thrice holy" of Isaiah 6:3

"And one [seraph] cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy,** is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

b. The Trinity is openly declared in the **New Testament.**

(1) At Christ's baptism (Matt. 3:16–17)

The **Father** speaks.
The **Son** is baptized.
The **Holy Spirit** descends like a dove.

(2) In the baptismal formula

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father,** and of the **Son,** and of the **Holy Ghost."** *Matt. 28:19*

(3) In the apostolic benediction

"The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ,** and the love of **God,** and the communion of the **Holy Ghost,** be with you all. Amen." *2 Cor. 13:14*

(4) In the teachings of Jesus

"And I [**Jesus**] will pray the **Father,** and he shall give you another **Comforter,** that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth." *John 14:16–17*

(5) In the fact that all three are called "God"

"Grace to you and peace from **God our Father."** *Rom. 1:7*

"Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh **Christ** came, who is

[illegible]od blessed for ever. Amen."
Rom. 9:5

"But unto the **Son** he saith, thy throne, **O God**, is for ever and ever." *Heb. 1:8*

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the **Holy Ghost?** . . . thou hast not lied unto men, but unto **God.**" *Acts 5:3–4*

3. God is a Spirit (John 4:24).

The word ***Spirit*** is the best way to describe the divine nature. God is not material; the Scriptures clearly indicate that fact (see Isa. 66:1; 1 Kings 8:27). This means that He does not have a body and that He is invisible (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17).

Willow

"And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook." *Lev. 23:40*

The willow was among the "four species" of trees from which the Hebrews were supposed to take boughs at the Feast of Tabernacles. (The others were the citron "goodly trees," the palm, and the myrtle "thick trees.") There are two species of willows native to Palestine, both of which are deciduous trees that shed their leaves at the end of summer.

A question that naturally arises concerns the Bible's use of expressions such as God's "hand" or His "back" or His "face." If He is a Spirit, why do we have such expressions in the Bible? These are called ***anthropomorphisms;*** i.e., **ascribing to God human features to help us as simple human beings to begin to understand God's feelings toward us and His working in our lives.** Technically, "no man has seen God at any time," but if God wills, He can put on the outward appearance of a man to meet with men.

4. God is a **Person.**

Two ingredients are required in order to classify someone as a person: **self-consciousness** and **self-determination.** God's **"I am"** (Ex. 3:14) implies self-consciousness; His **"I will"** (Ex. 6:6–8) implies self-determination.

God possesses all the qualities of personhood. He possesses **intellect** (Ex. 3:7; Isa. 1:18), **emotion** (1 Kings 11:9; Prov. 6:16), and **will** (Gen. 3:15). His personal names and the personal pronouns used of Him indicate personality (Gen. 15:6; Ex. 3:14; and Ps. 23:1). God is a living Person (Jer. 10:10–16).

Hebrew Vowel Points

The Biblical Hebrew language consists only of consonants. In the eighth or ninth century A.D., the Masoretes began adding vowel sounds (indicated by dots and lines above or below the Hebrew consonants) called **vowel points.** These were introduced as a pronunciation guide for those unfamiliar with the true sound of the Hebrew language.

Adding these vowel points to the Hebrew consonant **daleth** (the English "d" sound) results in these phonetic blends:

dĕ dā dă dä dī dŏ dōō də

By the Masoretes' placing the vowel points above or below the Hebrew consonants there was less likelihood the Hebrew consonants (inspired by God) would be confused with the vowel points (added by man) than if the vowels were added between the Hebrew consonants (as in most languages).

Occasionally a vowel point will join with a succeeding consonant (Hebrew reads from right to left) to express a stronger vowel sound.

dō(w) dōō(w) dē(y)

B. The names of God

1. God's Old Testament names

a. Yahweh: The Self-Existent One ("I am"—Ex. 3:14)

This is God's covenant name. It is always an indication that God keeps His promises even though man fails Him often. This name was highly honored by the scribes, who were responsible for copying Biblical manuscripts. Before they would write this name, they would take a bath and change their clothes. Once they began to write His holy name they would not even allow the king's entrance to interrupt them. Should we today reverence His holy name any less?

Jehovah

The early Jews had such a reverence for the name of God that they would not even pronounce publicly one form of His name, the covenant name of Jehovah. As early as Nehemiah's day they feared that to pronounce it might make them guilty of breaking the third commandment ("Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"). In Hebrew (which originally consisted of consonants exclusively) the word is written YHWH and is pronounced Yahweh (yä′wāy). But since the Jews would not pronounce it, they substituted another name for God as they read it. This second title meant "Lord" or "Master," and was written aDoNaY and pronounced Adonai (ă·dō·nī′).

To indicate this substitution, the scribes did an interesting thing. As they added the vowel points to the Hebrew consonants, they placed the vowel points of aDoNaY under the consonants of YaHWeH. This was a constant reminder to them that while they were to **write** YHWH (the Self-Existent One) they were to **pronounce** aDoNaY (Lord or Master). This scribal addition resulted in the appearance of YeHoWaH (or JeHoVaH as the Germans write it). European scholars of the Renaissance supposed, therefore, that the correct pronunciation was "Jehovah."

The name Jehovah should be a constant reminder to us of the deep reverence all men should have for the wonderful name of God.

Consonants of:		Vowel Points of:		
Y a H W e H	+	a D o N a Y	=	Jehovah
"The Self-Existent One"		"Lord, Master"		

b. Adonai: "My Lord; my Master"

Our Master has a right to our obedience (Matt. 23:10; Luke 6:46; John 13:13), and as His servants we have the privilege of direction in His service (Isa. 6:8–11).

c. Elohim: "the Strong One"; "the One to be Feared" (Gen. 1:1)

When God first introduced Himself to us in Genesis 1:1, He used the name which shows He is indeed **strong** enough to create the heavens and the earth and is therefore worthy of reverence.

d. El Shaddai: "The All-Sufficient One" (Gen. 17:1)

God reminded Abraham of His "all-sufficiency" when He promised Abraham a son in his old age.

e. El Elyon: "the Most High God" (Isa. 14:13–14)

This name for God is also found throughout the book of Daniel as the Babylonian rulers realized Daniel's God was superior to their heathen gods.

2. God's New Testament names

a. Theos (God): the Old Testament "Elohim" (John 20:28)

b. Kurios (Lord): the Old Testament "Adonai" (John 20:28)

c. Pater (Father): no Old Testament equivalent (Luke 11:2)

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He established the parental relationship between God and man. When an individual accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, God becomes his heavenly Father.

> "But as many as received him, to them gave he [illegible] to become the sons of God, even to them that [illegible] on his name." *John 1:12*

d. Immanuel: "God with us" (Isa. 7:14; 8:8–10; Matt. 1:23)

God was **with us** for 33 years in the person of Jesus Christ. Someday He will be **with us** forever (Rev. 21:3).

LESSON 14

God's Acts of Creation

A. Definitions of creation

Creation is the act of God whereby He brought all things into existence. The word *creation* is used in two senses: **immediate creation** and **mediate creation.**

1. Immediate creation (Gen. 1:1)

Immediate creation was the act of the Triune God by which He brought into existence **immediately,** without the use of pre-existing materials, the entire universe.

a. All three Persons of the Trinity created.

(1) God the Father created.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." *Gen. 1:1*

The Hebrew word for God (*Elohim*) in this verse reveals two things: (1) God is "The Strong One," perfectly capable of creating the world, and (2) this plural form of the Hebrew infers that the Trinity was present and active in the creative act.

(2) God the Son created.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." *John 1:1, 3*

"For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by him, and for him." *Col. 1:16*

(3) God the Holy Spirit created.

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." *Gen. 1:2*

b. The Trinity created the universe **out of nothing.**

The Latin phrase ***ex nihilo*** is used to signify this creation "out of nothing."

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." *Gen. 1:3*

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed **by the word of God,** so that things which are seen **were not made of things which do appear."** *Heb. 11:3*

Ram

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." *Gen. 22:13*

The ram, which is a male goat or sheep, was an important animal in Bible times. "Ram's skins dyed red" (Ex. 26:14) adorned the Tabernacle and the ram's horn became the trumpet (*shofar*) used to assemble the congregation. Rams also served as sacrificial animals, as in Abraham's experience on Mt. Moriah.

2. Mediate creation

Mediate creation is the act of God in which He does not originate things but simply shapes and transforms material that is already in existence.

Many of the miracles of Christ were accomplished by mediate creation. He turned water into wine (John 2:1–11), fed 5,000 men with five loaves of bread and two fish (John 6:5–14), transformed blind eyes (John 9:1–41), deaf ears (Mark 7:31–37), lame legs (John 5:1–9), and wicked hearts (Ps. 51:10, 17).

In **creation** God created something out of nothing.

In **salvation** God creates something holy out of something unholy.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." *2 Cor. 5:17*

B. The basis of creation

1. Both creation as declared in the Scriptures and the man-made philosophy of evolution are based on faith.

   a. The Christian believes by faith that there is a God and that God created as He says in His Word.

   "Through **faith** we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." *Heb. 11:3*

   b. The evolutionist believes by faith either that there is no God, or that if there is a God, He did not create the heavens and the earth as He revealed in the first two chapters of Genesis.

   "The more one studies paleontology [the fossil record] the more certain one becomes that evolution is **based on faith alone.**"

   —Louis T. More, evolutionist

   "What is evolution based upon? Upon nothing whatever but **faith,** upon belief in the reality of the unseen—belief in fossils that cannot be produced, belief in the embryological evidence that does not exist, belief in the breeding experiments that refuse to come off. **It is faith 'unjustified by works.'** "

   —Arthur N. Fields, Australian geologist

"Evolution is a time-honored scientific tenet of **faith.**" —David Allbrook, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Western Australia

"Meanwhile, though our **faith** in evolution stands unshaken, we have no acceptable account of the origin of 'species.' " —William Bateson, evolutionist

"Evolution is a fairy tale for adults."
—Dr. Duane Gish, biologist

"In *Grimms' Fairy Tales* someone kisses a frog and in two seconds it becomes a prince. That is a fairy tale. In evolution, someone kisses a frog and in two million years, it becomes a prince. That is science. **It is simply a faith.**" —Dr. D. James Kennedy

2. Creation is based on a **reasonable** faith.

a. The scientific method requires observability and repeatability (i.e., the ability to duplicate something in a controlled environment).

b. God is the only One who **observed** the creation.

"And God **saw** everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." *Gen. 1:31*

Cucumber

"We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." *Num. 11:5*

The Hebrew word translated *cucumbers* (*kishuim*) refers to two members of the genus *Cucumis:* the garden cucumber and the muskmelon. These plants, which are native to northern India and East Africa respectively, were cultivated in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and formed part of the Hebrews' diet, for which they longed to return to slavery.

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, . . . Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" *Job 38:1–4*

c. No one has **observed** evolution in progress.

"Within the period of human history we do not know of a single instance of the transformation of one species into another one. . . . It may be claimed that the theory of descent is lacking, therefore, in the most essential feature [an eyewitness to its occurrence] which is needed to place the theory on a scientific basis."

—Evolutionist T. H. Morgan, *Evolution and Adaptation.* Quoted by D. James Kennedy in *Why I Believe* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1980), p. 59.

d. Neither creation (of this universe) nor evolution is repeatable.

(1) God ended His creation.

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made." *Gen. 2:2*

"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." *Ex. 20:11*

(2) Man cannot "duplicate" evolution in the scientific laboratory.

"Neither evolution nor creation can be either confirmed or falsified scientifically."

—Dr. N. Heribert-Nilsson

"[The evolutionary] assumptions by their nature are not capable of experimental verification." —G. A. Kerkut, evolutionist

e. Creation is reasonable.

Design surely demands a Designer. An effect demands a Cause. Organization demands an Intelligence behind it. Creation is a faith based on the observable evidence of order and design all about us in the observable world and universe.

"Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen." *Heb. 11:1*

C. The importance of belief in creation

1. It determines our attitude toward the trustworthiness of God's Word.

Because of its "supernatural" features, the account of the creation is one of the first areas to be questioned when an individual or group begins its decline into a total rejection of the Word of God. Perhaps more Bibles have had the first eleven chapters of Genesis theoretically "cut out" than any other passage of Scripture. It is very important that we accept the account of Creation for the following reasons:

a. If we cannot accept Moses' account of creation, then we cannot accept the words of Christ.

Jesus Himself put the books of Moses on an equal plane with His own words.

> "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For **had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me:** for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" *John 5:45–47*

b. If we cannot trust the Biblical account of creation, how can we trust the Biblical accounts of salvation by faith, eternal life, heaven, and hell?

Some evolutionists (theistic evolutionists) would have us believe that evolution was God's method for completing His original creation. But what kind of God would He be if His revelation to us concerning the original Creation was inaccurate? He certainly would not be a God worthy of our trust concerning our eternal destiny and the way of salvation.

2. To reject God's Word and His plan of salvation necessitates that the unbeliever theorize some system of origins such as evolution.

> ved] man receiveth not the things
> hey are foolishness unto him:
> them, because they are spiritually
> *1 Cor. 2:14*

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." *2 Cor. 4:3–4*

In the light of these verses, it is not surprising that many people accept the idea of evolution. If they were to accept Creation, then they would also need to accept the fact of their own soul's lost condition and their future destiny in hell.

"[He] that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." *John 3:20*

What Evolutionists Say

"[Creation] will present a parallel to the theory of evolution itself, a theory universally **accepted not because it can be proved by logically coherent evidence** to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible."
—Professor D. M. S. Watson

"Evolution is **unproved and unprovable.** We believe it because the only alternative is special creation, and that is unthinkable." —Sir Arthur Keith, evolutionist

"One cannot assume that man is madeover anthropoid ape of any sort, for much of the available **evidence is strongly against that assumption.**"
—Wm. L. Straus, Jr.

"It is clear that the doctrine of evolution is directly antagonistic to that of Creation. . . . Evolution, if consistently accepted, makes it impossible to believe the Bible." —Thomas Huxley

"I suppose the reason we leaped at *The Origin of Species* was because the idea of God interfered with our sexual mores." —Sir Julian Huxley

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And **they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.**" *2 Tim. 4:3–4*

When an individual rejects the Bible as God's Word, he opens himself to the belief in "fables." The tragic end is a life of hopelessness and despair.

Eminent Scientists Reject Evolution

Recently, several highly respected scientists have shocked the scientific world by publicly rejecting the theory of evolution. The decision to reject evolution was not easy for these scientists to make, but their carefully detailed scientific data allowed them no other recourse. The facts, which were drawn from the fields of microbiology and mathematics, spoke for themselves, and astronomers **Sir Fred Hoyle** and **Chandra Wickramasinghe** were led to conclude that "the only logical answer to life is creation. There is no way around it."

Paleontologist **Colin Patterson** of the British Museum of Natural History is another eminent scientist who has expressed his doubts about evolution. Of the theory he says, "One morning I woke up and something had happened in the night, and it struck me that I had been working this stuff [evolutionary theory] for twenty years and there was not one thing I knew about it. That's quite a shock to learn that one can be misled so long."

Obviously, evolution should in no way pose a threat to a person's belief in the literal Biblical account of Creation. Perhaps Sir Fred Hoyle said it best when he wrote that the "scientific world has been bamboozled into believing that evolution has been proved. Nothing could be further from the truth."

—Keith Graham, et al., *Biology: God's Living Creation* (Pensacola: *A Beka Book*, 1986), pp. 394–395.

LESSON 15

The Six Days of Creation

The Bible records the creation of our earth with its atmosphere, waters, and living things in six twenty-four hour days.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that **in them is,** and rested the seventh day." *Ex. 20:9–11*

It may be helpful to remember the days of creation by grouping them in pairs. Days 1 and 4 describe God's creation of light and the instruments of that light. Days 2 and 5 involved the creation of the atmosphere, the waters, and the creatures that inhabit those areas. Days 3 and 6 emphasized God's bringing forth of the land and plants as well as the "creatures" that inhabit the land.

Day 1	Light created; day and night	**Day 4**	Sun, moon, and stars made visible to give seasons, months, and time
Day 2	Atmosphere above divided from waters beneath	**Day 5**	Fowl and water creatures created
Day 3	Land made visible; plant kingdom created	**Day 6**	Land animals and man created

A. The first day (Gen. 1:3–5)

God had only to speak in order for this world to come into existence.

"**By the word of the Lord** were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. For he spake, and it was done; **he commanded,** and it stood fast." *Ps. 33:6, 9*

"Let them praise the name of the Lord: for **he commanded,** and they were created." *Ps. 148:5*

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed **by the word of God.**" *Heb. 11:3*

The darkness as well as the light was created by God. Since "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), He created

darkness for the benefit of mankind (Isa. 45:7). According to man's present knowledge, darkness is the absence of light.

On the first day God probably started the earth rotating on its axis, giving the continual night and day that mankind still continues to enjoy.

"I form the light, and create darkness." *Isa. 45:7*

"Thou makest darkness, and it is night." *Ps. 104:20*

B. The second day (Gen. 1:6–8)

"And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."
Gen. 1:6

The word *firmament* comes from a verb which means "to beat out, to spread out." It seems to refer to the expanse of the heavens. In verse eight of Genesis 1 "God called the firmament Heaven." The Bible uses the word *heaven* to refer to three different places. The first heaven is the atmosphere of the earth (Gen. 1:8); the second heaven is outer space (Jer. 23:24); and the third heaven is the place of God's abode (2 Cor. 12:2). Evidently the matter of the universe had already been created and the earth was covered with water vapor. On the second day God divided the water vapor; part was condensed, and part remained as water vapor surrounding the earth, but it was spread out into a firmament for the sky.

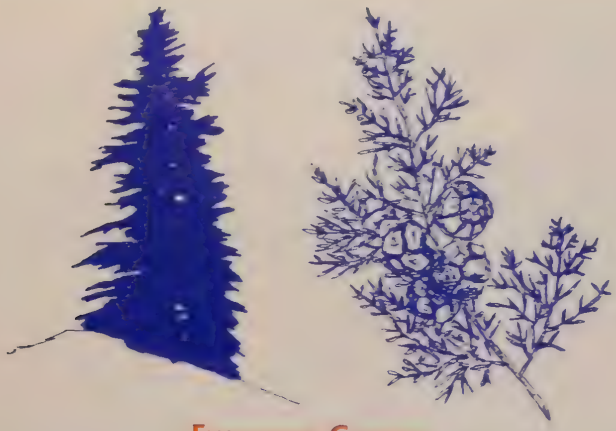
C. The third day (Gen. 1:9–13)

On the third day of creation God caused the dry land to appear as it bulged up out of the waters that had covered the earth. He called the dry land Earth. God's right to name this planet shows His dominion over all that He has created. God later gave this "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" to Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28).

God caused trees and all the plant kingdom to come forth out of the dry land, and all of these had the appearance of age. The trees and plants were capable of bearing fruit. That which would be needed by mankind was already prepared three days before God created man.

D. The fourth day (Gen. 1:14–19)

On this day God caused the luminaries to give the light for day and the light for night. The light-bearers would bear the light that



Evergreen Cypress

"Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees." *1 Kings 9:11*

The Hebrew word (*berosh*) translated "fir" or "fir tree" refers to three species of coniferous trees with small scalelike or short-linear leaves: the evergreen cypress, the Cilician fir, and the eastern savin. The wood of these trees is strong and hard and was used to construct boats and buildings. The evergreen cypress is native to Israel, and the two other trees are found in Lebanon.

God had created on the first day. God then gives five purposes of these luminaries.

> "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." *Gen. 1:14*

Today we still get our day from the sun, our months from the moon, our years from the sun's movement on the horizon, and our time is calculated by the stars. If these had been created in verse 1, then on the fourth day God caused the atmosphere to clear up sufficiently for man to be able to observe these heavenly bodies. We know today that some planets are covered with rings of clouds that obscure any observations of other heavenly bodies. Even heavily overcast days prohibit our seeing the sun, moon, or stars. On the fourth day God made it possible for man to calculate time.

In this very first chapter of the Bible God gives a prophecy concerning His use of the sun, moon, and stars as signs of His active participation in the course of history.

> "For we have seen **his star** in the east, and are come to worship him." *Matt. 2:2*

[illegible] signs in the sun, and in the **moon**, and [illegible]
Luke 21:25

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the **moon** into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come."
Acts 2:20

God reveals that the purpose of these luminaries was to divide the seasons as well as night and day. In the covenant God made with Noah, He promised him that the seasons, days, and years would never cease.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."
Gen. 8:22

This is a wonderful promise. Every time the sun rises or the seasons change we should be reminded that **God keeps His promises.** Even when the nation of Israel was in captivity, the prophets reminded them that God would never break His covenant with them. Just as it is impossible for man to change the seasons, it is impossible for God to break His promises.

"Thus saith the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant."
Jer. 33:20–21

E. The fifth day (Gen. 1:20–23)

In the description of the fifth day of creation two interesting expressions are used. The first is the word translated "whales" (Gen. 1:21), and the other is the phrase "after their kind" (Gen. 1:21).

1. *Whales* (Gen. 1:21)

a. Definition of the word

The English word *whale* in Genesis 1:21 is a translation of the Hebrew word *tannin*. It could better be translated "great sea monster" or "gigantic aquatic reptile." This seems to be the beginning of the answer to the "Dilemma of the Dinosaur." It is interesting to note that large aquatic mammals are an embarrassment to the evolutionist. He has a difficult time explaining why a fish would become a lizard, then a piglike land mammal, then reverse its "evolution" and go back into the water as it continues to grow larger.

b. Dragon theme in Scripture

What the Bible calls dragons are probably what scientists today call dinosaurs. Dragons are mentioned in the following Scripture references:

> "Their wine is the poison of **dragons,** and the cruel venom of asps." *Deut. 32:33*

> "And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the **dragon** well." *Neh. 2:13*

> "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the **dragon** shalt thou trample under feet." *Ps. 91:13*

> "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the **dragon,** that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." *Rev. 20:1–2*

c. Dinosaurs in Job

Many Bible scholars believe that the behemoth and leviathan of Job were also dinosaurs. Since Job probably lived before the events of Genesis 12, he may have personally observed these creatures roaming the earth and swimming in the sea.

(1) Behemoth

> "Behold now **behemoth,** which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the naval of his belly. He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his

mouth. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares." *Job 40:15–24*

Job 40 describes behemoth as an extremely large creature living near a brook and eating grass. The size of his tail ("like a cedar") does not appear to describe any animal in existence today. It may have been a reptile similar to *Brontosaurus* a huge, swamp-dwelling herbivore.

(2) Leviathan

"Canst thou draw out **leviathan** with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?" *Job 41:1–5*

No creature on earth was as fearless as leviathan, which God describes in Job 41 as a fire-breathing aquatic animal with scaly skin, thick armor, powerful jaws, and terrible teeth.

"Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the [illegible] or the habergeon. He esteemeth iron [illegible] and brass as rotten wood. The ar[illegible] annot make him flee: slingstones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are [illegible] as stubble: he laugheth at the shak[illegible] spear. Sharp stones are under him:

he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary." *Job 41:19–32*

d. Reasons for extinction

Scientists have given many possible reasons for the extinction of these beasts. The most popular current hypothesis is that they became extinct suddenly as a result of some catastrophe. Many Christians think that the dinosaur probably could not cope with the vast climatic changes brought about after the Genesis Flood and thus died out. Since it is quite common for animals even today to become extinct for one reason or another, there is no reason (other than circular reasoning to "prove" evolution) to believe that their extinction is in any way related to evolutionary philosophy.

Before the Flood, both men and animals had a longer life expectancy. Since a man reaches his full size around the age of 20, living to be 70 or 700 would not change his physical stature appreciably. But that is not true of reptiles. They continue to grow physically throughout their entire life span. Therefore, the decreased life span after the Flood evidently decreased the ultimate size of the reptiles. The dinosaur skeletons we see in museums today may be those reptiles that grew for several hundred years. Since the Millennium will see the return of

longevity (Isa. 65:20), perhaps it will also see the return of large reptiles.

Dinosaurs were no doubt on Noah's ark, since dragons (dinosaurs) are mentioned in Scripture after the Flood (Deut. 32:33; Neh. 2:13). The huge adults did not have to fit into the ark, of course. Young dinosaurs, or even eggs, would do quite as well.

2. "After their kind" (Gen. 1:21)

The Bible indicates that it is impossible for **one** kind of plant or animal to produce a **different** kind of plant or animal. Each must reproduce "after his kind" (Gen. 1:21).

> "Just over two hundred years ago, a Swedish naturalist named **Carolus Linnaeus** (1707–1778) devised a simple, practical method of classification for use by scientists. We use his method today, with some additions. Linnaeus, an outstanding naturalist, was also an excellent teacher and a dedicated and outspoken Christian. Because he accepted the Biblical account of Creation, Linnaeus concluded that the created kinds never alter enough to form new and different kinds. He stood firm on this belief and is given credit for the doctrine of **fixity of species.** He insisted, "Nullae species novae" (No new species). This was the beginning of a sharp difference of opinion between Bible-believing naturalists and those who did not believe the Bible. It is important to realize that what the Bible means by "created kinds" and what Linnaeus meant by "fixed species" is not necessarily identical with what many modern biologists classify as a "species." The Biblical **kind** [Hebrew, **min**] means "group of organisms that can interbreed freely in nature," and may refer to a species, a genus, or a family."
>
> —Keith Graham, et al., *Biology: God's Living Creation* (Pensacola: A Beka Book Publications, 1986), p. 78.

The evolutionist has consistently claimed that there **are** examples of cross-breeding of different kinds throughout history. Two favorite arguments were: "Eohippus" and "mutations."

a. Eohippus (This was allegedly a horse whose descendants had one less toe than their ancestor.)

(1) This still does not explain where Eohippus came from.

(2) There is no proof that this so-called "fossil horse" evolved from another horse.

(3) There is no proof that Eohippus is actually a horse.

(4) The "change" in the number of toes contradicts evolutionary theory.

Heinze said, "Losing toes does not make an organism more complex, but more simple."

Evolutionists by and large have discarded the Eohippus story by now. It is only seen now in textbooks.

b. **Mutations** (sudden small changes in the DNA code of the genes which are passed on to an organism's offspring)

(1) Mutations are extremely rare (1 in 10,000–100,000).

(2) Mutations are usually harmful.

(3) Mutations are very unpredictable, happening at random.

(4) Mutations never develop any new species.

Similarities in various animals indicate a common Creator. Just as a certain writer, composer, or artist has a certain style that is easily recognized; so **the Master Designer has consistently put His style into His wonderful creation.** Similarities between the monkey and man could just as easily indicate that the monkey evolved from man (one scientist has suggested the possibility) as the reverse. Actually, they indicate that both were created by God.

Biochemistry and Man's Ancestors

1. Blood precipitation tests indicate the chimpanzee is man's closest relative.
2. Milk chemistry indicates that the donkey is man's closest relative.
3. Cholesterol level tests indicate that the garter snake is man's closest relative.
4. Tear enzyme chemistry indicates that the chicken is man's closest relative.
5. On the basis of another type of blood chemistry test, the butter bean is man's closest relative.

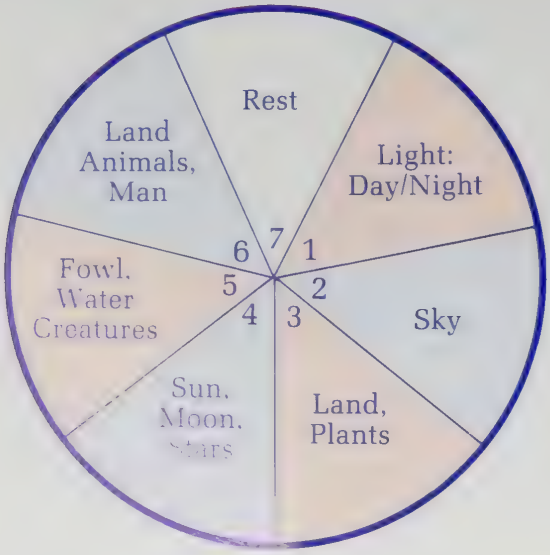
—Gary E. Parker, *Creation: The Facts of Life* (San Diego: Creation-Life Publishers, 1980), pp. 21–22.

F. The sixth day (Gen. 1:24–31; 2:7–25)

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." *Gen. 1:24, 26–27, 31*

The sixth day was the climax of God's creative acts. He began the day by creating all the land animals and ended it by creating man and woman. Man is the crown of all of creation. Man is the only being made in the image of God with intellect, emotions, and a will. So important was this sixth day to God that He devoted parts of the first two chapters of Genesis to the details of this wonderful creation. By the end of the sixth day He had completed all His creation and was ready for a day of rest.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and **all the host** of them. And on the seventh day God **ended** his work which he had made." *Gen. 2:1–2*



LESSON 16

The Sovereignty of God

A. Definitions of God's sovereignty

Sovereignty is the absolute right that God has to run the universe as He wants because He created it for His own purposes and glory.

Sovereignty is God's right to do what He wants with what is His.

In the parable of Matthew 20, a householder early in the morning began to hire workers for his vineyard. They agreed to work for a normal day's wages. He also hired additional workers at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours of the day (9 a.m., 12 noon, 3 p.m., and 5 p.m., respectively). At the end of the day the householder gave all the workers the same amount of money, a penny (or denarius). Some murmured and complained, but the householder was correct when he replied:

> "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" *Matt. 20:15*

The householder could have given the late-coming workers more money than the others without their even coming to work at all.

Sovereignty is a matter of ownership.

B. Extent of God's sovereignty

1. God controls the universe.

> "Where wast thou when I [God] laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?" *Job 38:4–6*

> "He sendeth out his word, and melteth them [snow, frost, and ice]: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow." *Ps. 147:18*

[illegible] may be the children of your Father which is [illegible] for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and [illegible] and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. *Matt. 5:45*

2. God controls the plant and animal creation.

"The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." *Ps. 104:21*

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." *Jon. 1:17*

"And the Lord God prepared a gourd. . . . But God prepared a worm." *Jon. 4:6–7*

"Behold the fowls of the air: . . . your heavenly Father feedeth them." *Matt. 6:26*

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field . . . shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" *Matt. 6:30*

3. God controls all nations.

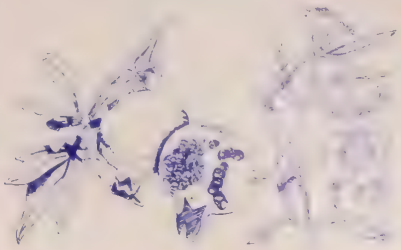
"He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again." *Job 12:23*

"For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations." *Ps. 22:28*

"The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." *Dan. 4:25*

Pomegranate

"And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs." *Num. 13:23*



Together with grapes and figs, the pomegranate was chosen by the spies to represent the beauty and bounty of the land of Canaan. The pomegranate, however, did not become a staple in the diet of the Israelites as did the grape, the [illegible]ate, and the fig. The beautiful shape of [illegible]omegranate ornamented the Tem[illegible]lden bells, furniture, embroidery, carved work, and priestly garments.

"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"
Dan. 4:35

4. God controls the length of a man's life.

"In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." *Job 12:10*

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." *Luke 12:20*

"This spake he [Jesus], signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God." *John 21:19*

"Jesus saith unto him [Peter], If I will that he [John] tarry [live] till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."
John 21:22

5. God controls all things for His glory.

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."
Isa. 46:9–11

"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." *Ps. 115:3*

Barley

"So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley." *Ruth 2:17*

In Bible times, barley and wheat were the basic food grains. Of the two, barley was the cheaper, being cultivated in poorer soils and harvested several weeks before the wheat. Barley was eaten by the poorer people and was fed to horses and cattle. Ruth, gleaning in Boaz's barley field, was among the poorest of the poor.

ine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will give my glory unto another." *Isa. 48:11*

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: . . . who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." *Eph. 1:9–11*

C. Self-limitations of God's sovereignty

If man could limit God in any way, He would cease to be God. But God in His sovereignty may impose upon Himself certain limitations.

> "It should be borne in mind that if allowing man a measure of freedom were imposed upon God from without, or if it were forced upon Him by some strange necessity, objection to it might be made. But when it is that which He alone initiates—of His own voluntary doing—out of pure love and for high and lofty ends which His unmitigated omnipotence assures, it is only to the praise of His glory that it is so."
>
> —Samuel Fisk, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Bros., 1973), p. 52.

It is clear from the Scriptures that man may limit God if God allows him that privilege.

"Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and **limited** the Holy One of Israel." *Ps. 78:41*

The limitations that God has placed upon Himself are primarily in three areas: the existence of sin, the free will of man, and the privilege of prayer.

1. The existence of sin

God did not determine sin's existence, but He **allowed** it in the universe.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." *James 1:13*

God **could have** made man without the ability to sin (as He will in heaven some day), but that was not His plan for earth. He wanted man to love Him by choice, not by force. **The Bible teaches five lessons about God's relationship to sin.**

a. God **permits** some sin to fully manifest itself.

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. . . . Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." *Rom. 1:21, 24*

b. God **prevents** some sin.

"And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." *Gen. 20:6*

c. God **determines the limits** to which Satan may go in tempting or trying the individual.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." *Job 1:12*

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life." *Job 2:6*

"God is faithful, who will not suffer [allow] you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." *1 Cor. 10:13*

d. God **can overrule** every expression of sin for His glory.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." *Ps. 76:10*

e. God **can restore** the wasted years of a sinful life.

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." *Joel 2:25*

2. The free will of man

It is a wonderful truth of Scripture that a sovereign God can determine to give man a free choice in the matter of his personal salvation. God did not **have** to give man this privilege, but the Bible indicates that He **did.** God never forces Himself upon an individual.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and **ye would not!**" *Matt. 23:37*

"To allow man such a measure of self-determination is something which only a great and omnipotent God would do. The greater and more supreme He is (coupled with the greatness of His grace), the more He would willingly grant man such restricted freedom of action. Anything short of that would result in a merely mechanical universe, a world of rigid determination. Furthermore, such a mechanistic existence would leave no room for real human responsibility or accountability, or ground for a final judgment, nor would it allow place for any spontaneous response to one's Maker."

—Samuel Fisk, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, pp. 51–52.

"God has a very high regard for freedom. He could have made the creature an automaton, but He preferred to make him capable of choosing whether or not he would obey and serve Him. . . . God graciously restores to all men sufficient ability to make a choice in the matter of submission to Him. This is the salvation-bringing grace of God that has appeared to all men."

—Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, pp. 155, 345.

It is clear from Scripture that God's sovereign will includes the **desires** of His heart, which He **refuses to force** upon His creation.

[illegible]ffering to usward, **not willing** [desirous] [illegible] wish, but that **all** should come to repent[illegible] *2 Pet. 3:9*

The Two Horsemen

"Let us imagine two horsemen. One sits on a horse every movement of which he controls absolutely. The horse does not move a fraction of an inch in any part unless the rider decides it shall move and sees to it that the movement is made. Here we see absolute control. Another man sits on another horse. This horse makes various movements which the rider does not command, does not initiate, cannot even predict in detail. But the rider is in control. The first horse is a hobbyhorse, the second is a spirited five-gaited showhorse. But which is the better horseman? Little Willie, operating his mechanical horse in the corner drugstore, or the prize-winning rider at the horse show? Is it actually more to the credit of God that He shall ride this universe like a hobbyhorse, or like a real, living creature of intelligence and spirit? . . . We Christians will not give up believing in the sovereignty of God. . . . But we do not have to suppose that God cannot be sovereign without robbing His creatures of all their freedom."

—Dr. Kenneth J. Foreman, *God's Will and Ours*, p. 30. Quoted in Samuel Fisk, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, p. 55.

3. The privilege of prayer

God has allowed Himself to be influenced by the prayers of His children. This is not a privilege which the Christian can demand. God has allowed us this wonderful privilege. If it were not possible to alter a given circumstance, all of God's commandments to pray would be ludicrous, "a stupendous farce, a colossal and cruel satire." (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 137.)

"If God can, in response to the petition of His confiding child, alter what, without such petition, would have been otherwise, we find ourselves wondering if such a view is not, in comparison with that of absolute predestination, equally honoring to God and quite as stimulating to man. To many it seems far more so."

—Dr. William E. Biederwolf, *How Can God Answer Prayer?* third ed., pp. 120–121.

The Scope of God's Sovereignty

1. Sometimes God **decrees** (determines).

   "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined." *Luke 22:22*

2. Sometimes God **conceals.**

   "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God." *Deut. 29:29*

3. Sometimes God **recommends.**

   "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us **how ye ought to walk and to please** God. . . . For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." *1 Thess. 4:1–3*

4. Sometimes God **desires.**

   "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" *Deut. 5:29*

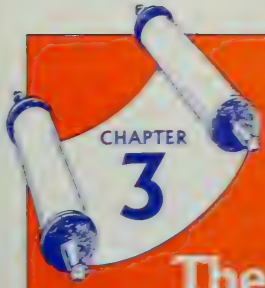
5. Sometimes God **permits.**

   "And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them." *Num. 22:12*

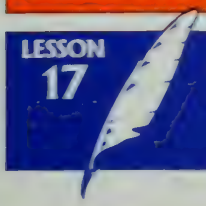
   (Later): "Go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." *Num. 22:20*

6. Sometimes God **considers.**

   [illegible]hat nation, against whom I have pro[illegible] from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." *Jer. 18:8*



Christology: The Doctrine of Christ



The Names and Nature of Jesus Christ

Christology is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is the study of Christ and His provision of salvation for a lost humanity. It is important that we understand this key doctrine as it relates to our eternal destiny.

It has been said that Christ **is** Christianity. False religions can continue without their leaders: cults can arise and their leaders be soon forgotten. But Christ **is** Christianity. Without Him Christianity has no meaning.

"The whole substance and strength of the Christian faith centres in Jesus Christ. Without Him there is absolutely nothing."
—Sinclair Patterson

A. Introduction

Jesus Christ is the theme of Scripture. Every book of the Old Testament foretells His coming. The Gospels give us the account of His life on earth. The Epistles and the book of Revelation reveal that He is coming again. Throughout the Bible God gives us beautiful pictures of Jesus Christ:

"God will provide himself a **lamb.**"

"There shall come **a Star** out of Jacob, and **a Sceptre** rise out of Israel."

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee **a Prophet** from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; him ye shall hearken."

"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the **Son of man** be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

"Behold, a **greater than Solomon** is here." *Matt. 12:42*

"[as] Moses lifted up **the serpent in the wilderness**, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." *John 3:14*

"This [Jesus Christ] is **the stone** which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." *Acts 4:11*

"saying with a loud voice, Worthy is **the Lamb that was slain** to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." *Rev. 5:12*

His coming to earth in the form of human flesh (the **incarnation**) was prophesied initially in Genesis 3:15, when God said to the serpent:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and **her seed: it shall bruise thy head**, and thou shalt bruise his heel." *Gen. 3:15*

This passage is called the "first gospel proclamation." It implies a virgin birth ("her seed"), shows the battle lines of the ages, and implies a two-fold coming of Christ. (At Christ's first coming His heel was bruised; at His second coming He will bruise the head of Satan).

The purpose of Christ's incarnation was determined before the foundation of the world.

"Him [Jesus Christ] being delivered **by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God**, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." *Acts 2:23*

"the Lamb slain **from the foundation of the world**" *Rev. 13:8*

Jesus Christ was born to die. He came into this world to die on a cross for our sins so we might have eternal life by trusting in Him.

B. The names of Christ

Whereas Jesus Christ has many names of a general nature, some of His names specifically indicate His deity while others specifically indicate His humanity.

1. **Christ** (John 1:41; 4:25; Matt. 16:16)
   a. This is His official title.
   b. It is the New Testament name for the Old Testament word ***Messiah,*** which means **"anointed one."**

In Simon Peter's great confession (Matt. 16:16), he is stating that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah:

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God." *Matt. 16:16*

c. The name *Christ* pictures Jesus in His three offices of **prophet, priest,** and **king.**

(1) The **prophet** (Isa. 61:1), **priest** (Ex. 29:1–7), and **king** (1 Sam. 16:13) were all anointed.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath **anointed me to preach** good tidings unto the meek." *Isa. 61:1*

"And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them . . . in the **priest's** office . . . shalt thou . . . **anoint** him." *Ex. 29:1–7*

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and **anointed** him [**King** David] in the midst of his brethren." *1 Sam. 16:13*

(2) Jesus was a **Prophet** (Luke 24:19), is a **Priest** (Heb. 4:14), and will be a **King** (Rev. 19:16).

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a **prophet** mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." *Luke 24:19*

"Seeing then that we have a great **high priest,** . . . Jesus the Son of God." *Heb. 4:14*

"And he [Jesus Christ] hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS,** AND LORD OF LORDS." *Rev. 19:16*

2. Son of God (Matt. 16:16)

Although some today might suggest that Jesus Christ was only "one of many gods" those who knew Him, whether friend or foe, understood His claim to deity.

"Then said they all, Art thou then the **Son of God?** And he [Jesus] said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth." *Luke 22:70–71*

a. This name indicates Christ's position in the Trinity.

b. It emphasizes His deity.

c. It is the emphasis of John's gospel.

3. Son of Man (John 5:26–27)

a. This is the title Jesus applied to Himself.

The phrase *Son of man* is found approximately forty times in the New Testament. With one exception, it is always used by Christ in referring to Himself. In the one exception, John 12:34, He is asked about this "unusual" phrase. Evidently Christ desired to veil His deity until the time was right. As a result He tended to use terms that emphasized His humanity and concealed His deity.

b. This name emphasizes His humiliation (Heb. 4:15).

c. This name is the emphasis of Luke's gospel.

4. God (Heb. 1:8; John 1:1; Titus 2:13)

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O **God**, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." *Heb. 1:8*

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of **the great God** and our Saviour Jesus Christ." *Titus 2:13*

The Bible clearly states that Jesus Christ is not a mere man. He is called God because He is God.

5. Lord (Luke 6:46)

One of the strongest testimonials to the deity of Christ was given by Thomas, the apostle who initially doubted the possibility of Christ's resurrection.

"Thomas answered and said unto him [Jesus Christ], My **Lord** and my God." *John 20:28*

a. This title emphasizes His position as the Master, King, and Ruler of our lives.

b. This title deserves obedience and reverence.

c. It is equivalent to the Old Testament "God."

6. Jesus (Matt. 1:21)

a. This is His personal, human name.

b. It is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name ***Joshua.***

(The names *Jesus* and *Joshua* are occasionally used interchangeably: Acts 7:45.)

c. It means **"Savior"** or **"Salvation"** (Acts 4:12).

7. Immanuel—"God with us" (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23)

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name **Emmanuel** [or Immanuel], which being interpreted is, God with us."
Matt. 1:23

8. Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:22)

Jesus was a **Nazarene** (from Nazareth), not a **Nazarite.** Samson, who took a special vow, was a Nazarite (Judg. 13).

9. The Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5)

Names of the Lord, Alphabetically

Alpha and Omega—Revelation 1:8
Bridegroom—Matthew 9:15
Chief Corner Stone—1 Peter 2:6
Desire of Nations—Haggai 2:7
Emmanuel—Matthew 1:23
Faithful and True—Revelation 19:11
Governor—Matthew 2:6
High Priest—Hebrews 5:10
Intercessor—Isaiah 59:16
Jesus of Nazareth—John 19:19
King of kings—Revelation 19:16
Lamb—Revelation 5:6, 8
Morning Star—Revelation 22:16
Nazarene—Matthew 2:23
Only Begotten Son—John 3:16
Prince—Acts 5:31
  Prince of Peace—Isaiah 9:6
  Prince of Life—Acts 3:15
  Prince of the kings of the earth—Revelation 1:5
Resurrection and Life—John 11:25
Shepherd—1 Peter 2:25
  Good Shepherd—John 10:11
  Great Shepherd—Hebrews 13:20–21
  Chief Shepherd—1 Peter 5:4
Truth—John 14:6
Vine—John 15:1–16
Word of Life—John 1:1

—Sunday School Times

C. The nature of Christ

1. The **humanity** of Jesus Christ

We speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as being perfect God and perfect man; 100 percent God and 100 percent man. **He was as much God as if He were not man at all and as much man as if He were not God at all.** Some cults emphasize the humanity of Christ to the exclusion of His deity. But the Scriptures teach **both.** As a perfect man He can empathize with us in our problems. As perfect God He could die on a cross for the sins of the world. Jesus Christ was both God and man.

a. Jesus Christ was a man.

(1) He had a human **parent.**

Mary is called His mother (Matt. 1:18, 2:11, 13:55). Jesus was born of the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4). He did not have a human father; Joseph was like a foster father.

(2) He had human **names.**

(a) Jesus

(b) Son of Man

(c) Jesus of Nazareth

(d) The Man Christ Jesus

(3) He had a human **appearance.**

He was Jewish (John 4:9; 20:14–15; 21:4–5).

(4) He possessed the essential elements of a physical nature—**body** (John 19:38–40), **soul** (Mark 14:34), and **spirit** (John 13:21).

(5) He had human **sinless infirmities.**

(a) Hunger (Matt. 4:2)

(b) Thirst (John 19:28)

(c) Fatigue (Matt. 8:44)

(d) Weariness (John 4:6)

(e) Agony (Luke 22:44)

(6) He developed in the usual, normal way of human **development** (Luke 2:40, 52).

b. Jesus Christ had **human characteristics.**

(1) Humility and love

(a) He washed His disciples' feet (John 13:14–15).

(b) He laid down His life for His friends (John 15:13).

(2) Meekness (Matt. 11:28–30; 2 Tim. 2:24–25)

Meekness is defined as an attitude of mind opposed to contentiousness. The meek person does not look for a fight, but that does not mean he is incapable of defending himself. When he is afflicted he would rather suffer wrong than do wrong. He seeks not revenge but reverence for God. Meekness is strength under control.

Jesus Christ was a perfect example of meekness. Although He had omnipotence in His Being, He controlled it in a true spirit of meekness and humility.

> "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." *Isa. 53:7*

> "And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and **meekness** and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things." *Ps. 45:4*

> "Then said Jesus unto him [Peter], Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" *Matt. 26:52–53*

(3) Balance

Jesus Christ is our example in balance. He could weep over a city (Luke 19:41–44) and a few minutes later cast wicked men out of the temple (Luke 19:45–48). He was a perfect balance of love and justice.

c. Jesus Christ performed **human activities.**

(1) He **prayed.**

> "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."
> *Mark 1:35*

If Jesus Christ, who had unbroken fellowship with His Heavenly Father, made time for prayer, how much more should we?

(2) He **worked** (John 5:17, 36; Matt. 13:54–55; Mark 6:3).

(3) He **learned.**

Although as God Christ is omniscient, as man He willingly kept within Himself certain knowledge so He could legitimately learn information as any normal human being. How He was able to do this is just one of the many mysteries of the Hypostatic Union (Jesus was 100 percent God and 100 percent man).

(a) The Bible says that Christ **learned obedience** (Heb. 5:8; Phil. 2:8).

(b) Luke 2:52 indicates that Christ **"increased"** physically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially.

2. The **deity** of Jesus Christ

a. Jesus Christ performed **divine activities.**

(1) He **created** (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:1–2).

> "God . . . hath . . . spoken unto us by his [illegible] by whom also he made the worlds."
> *Heb. 1:1–2*

(2) He **forgave sin** (Matt. 9:1–8).

> [illegible] . thy sins be forgiven thee."
> *Matt. 9:2*

(3) He **exercised judgment.**

> "the Lo[illegible]s Christ, who shall judge the

quick and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom" *2 Tim. 4:1*

Unbelievers are often bothered by the picture of the loving Savior as a righteous Judge. But the Bible teaches that holiness is consistent with Christ's character. This holiness demands that all sin be punished. John 5:22 indicates that God "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The picture of Christ at His second coming is quite graphic:

> "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God. . . . And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." *Rev. 19:13–15*

(4) He was worshiped.

(a) He accepted worship that was rightfully refused by men (Acts 10:25–26) and angels (Rev. 22:8–9).

This shows that He must have been more than a man or an angel. He must have been God.

(b) He accepted prayers that were made to Him.

> "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." *John 14:13–14*

(c) He accepted worship as God (John 5:23; Phil. 2:9–11).

> "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." *Phil. 2:9–11*

b. He had a divine **conception** (Matt. 1:20; John 8:42).

c. He had divine **names** (or titles).

(1) God

(2) Son of God

(3) Lord

(4) Immanuel

d. He had a divine **appearance at will** (Luke 9:27–36).

e. He has **divine characteristics.**

(1) He is **eternal.**

"In the beginning was the Word." *John 1:1*

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." *Heb. 13:8*

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." *Heb. 1:8*

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and is to come the Almighty." *Rev. 1:8*

(2) He is **omnipresent.**

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." *Matt. 18:20*

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." *Matt. 28:20*

"Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." *John 6:21*

(3) He is omniscient.

"But he knew their thoughts." *Luke 6:8*

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." *John 1:48*

"But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." *John 2:24–25*

(4) He is omnipotent.

His miracles proved that He is God. (Acts 2:22; Matt. 8:27; Mark 1:27; 2:5–10; John 3:2; 9:33). The motive of Christ's miracles was to demonstrate revealed truth. They were used by Him for three reasons:

(a) To show His deity (John 20:30–31).

(b) To draw attention to His message (John 6:26–27).

(c) To show His sovereignty (Heb. 2:3–4).

All of Christ's miracles were acts of mercy. Twenty-three of His thirty-five miracles were miracles of healing. Four words are used in the New Testament for Christ's miracles (works, wonders, signs, and powers).

(5) He is immutable.

"But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." *Heb. 1:12*

"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." *Heb. 7:24*

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever." *Heb. 13:8*

LESSON 18

The Significance of Christ's Supernatural Life

A. The significance of the virgin birth

The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is the great divide between the Bible believer and the skeptic. Since the skeptic cannot deny that a man named Jesus Christ lived, he must attempt to deny any concept that this Jesus was God. His rejection of supernaturalism leads the skeptic to deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. But the Bible believer understands that the Bible teaches such a doctrine and that it is significant to our understanding of salvation itself.

1. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ **proves again the reliability of Scripture.**

> "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, **of whom** was born Jesus, who is called Christ." *Matt. 1:16*

Normally a genealogy such as the one found in Matthew 1 will mention only the names of the fathers. But the above verse makes an important exception. The phrase "of whom" is in the feminine gender, which shows that Christ was physically related only to Mary. Even the smallest of details is accurately recorded in God's infallible Word.

2. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is the **fulfillment of a wonderful prophecy.**

> "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." *Isa. 7:14*

3. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is a **beautiful expression of the supernatural.**

> "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." *Isa. 9:6*

Everything about Jesus Christ was **wonderful.** It would also stand to reason that His birth would be "full of wonder."

4. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ was the means by which He acquired a human nature without affecting His sinless deity.

"And the Word was **made flesh.**" *John 1:14*

"Christ Jesus . . . **took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.**" *Phil. 2:5–7*

"And the angel answered and said unto her [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and **the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:** therefore also **that holy thing** which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." *Luke 1:35*

"Wherefore when he [Jesus Christ] cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering [for sin] thou wouldest not [need], but a body hast thou prepared me." *Heb. 10:5*

The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived

Here is a man who was born in a lowly manger, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in an obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty, and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never went to college. He never owned a house. He never had a family. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born.

He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness.

He had no credentials but himself.

He had nothing to do with this world except the power of his divine manhood.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him.

He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth while he was dying—his coat.

When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed tomb through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone. Today he is the center-piece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.

I am within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has THAT ONE SOLITARY LIFE. —Phillips Brooks

5. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ allowed Him to avoid the curse of Jeconiah.

In Jeremiah 22:24–30 we have an interesting account of a man by the name of Jeconiah or Coniah. (1 Chronicles 3:16–19 shows that "Coniah" was simply a contracted form of "Jeconiah.") Jeconiah is important because he is found in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus Christ.

> "And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel . . . And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."
>
> *Matt. 1:11–16*

But Jeremiah 22:24–30 indicates that Jeconiah was so wicked that God finally placed a curse upon him.

> "Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless [from this day forward], a man that shall not prosper in his days: for **no man** of **his seed** shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."
>
> *Jer. 22:30*

Normally this would not seem to be a problem except for the fact that Matthew 1 reveals Jesus Christ came through the line of Jeconiah and Jesus **will** sit upon the throne of His father David.

Evidently before this curse Jeconiah had had some children. One is mentioned in Matthew 1:12 by the name of Salathiel. But the stress of the curse is that none of **his seed** could ever sit upon David's throne. In order to inherit the throne, Jesus Christ had to be **legally** related to Jeconiah, but because of the curse He could not be **physically** ("his seed") related to Jeconiah.

> The book of Matthew gives Jesus' **legal line** through Joseph (Matt. 1:1–17).
>
> The book of Luke gives Jesus' **physical line** through Mary (Luke 3:23–38).

Here's how the virgin birth of Jesus Christ solved the dilemma. Jesus was **physically related only to Mary** through David's son, Nathan (Luke 3:31). However, Jesus was **legally**

related to Joseph through David's son, Solomon (Matt. 1:6). By being legally married before Christ was born, Joseph and Mary were used by God to avert the curse of Jeconiah while at the same time establishing the Christ-child in the royal line of David.

B. The significance of Christ's two natures

1. The incarnation is essential to the Scriptural doctrine of the Atonement.

2. Christ must have been **perfectly human.**

a. Man sinned; therefore, the penalty had to be borne by a Man.

b. Christ had to be a sinless Man in order to atone for sin.

The first man, Adam, had the ability to be sinless, but he failed. The "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), Jesus Christ, was able to be sinless, and He succeeded. For over thirty-three years Jesus Christ lived a perfect life on earth, succeeding where Adam had failed. He thereby was able to die for the sin of mankind and to restore the position of man lost in Adam's fall.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, . . . Jesus the Son of God . . . [who] was in all points tempted like as we are, **yet without sin.**"
Heb. 4:14–15

"For such an high priest became us, who is **holy,** harmless, **undefiled, separate from sinners,** and made higher than the heavens." *Heb. 7:26*

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: **Who did no sin,** neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." *1 Pet. 2:21–24*

c. Only a truly **human** mediator could enter empathetically into our trials and be a perfect example to follow. He should be to us a perfect example:

(1) of **love** (Matt. 5:39; John 15:12–13; 1 Cor. 13:1–8)

(2) of **patience** (Heb. 12:2)

(3) of **humility** (John 13:3–5; Phil. 2:5–8)

(4) of **soulwinning** (John 4)

(5) of **triumph** over temptation (Matt. 4)

Jesus was victorious over temptation without using His divine power. He merely quoted Scripture to the Devil, a defense that all of us must use.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." *Ps. 119:11*

3. Christ had to be God.

a. His sacrifice had to be of **infinite value.** He could die for the world (1 John 2:2) by dying for Adam (Rom. 5:12).

b. He **bore the wrath of God redemptively** so as to free mankind.

c. He was able to **apply** His work on the cross to needy humanity.

4. The acceptance of the deity of Christ is necessary to salvation.

There are those today who would have us believe that we can accept a totally human Christ as our example in life. But He cannot truly be our example until He is first our Savior. And He cannot be our Savior until we accept His deity. In John 8:24 Christ says these words:

[illegible]herefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: [illegible]e not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

By His saying, "I am," He was clearly indicating His deity. This is seen in John 8:58–59:

[illegible]em, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Ab[illegible]m was, I am. Then took they up stones to [illegible]

Those Jews knew exactly what Jesus was claiming when he said, "I am." They had read Exodus 3:14. And Jesus said in John 8:24 that a person will die in his sins unless he believes in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What Men Have Said about the Deity of Jesus Christ

"I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. . . . Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. Between him and whoever else in the world, there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things. . . . The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, everything is above me—everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an intelligence which certainly is not that of man . . . One can absolutely find nowhere, but in him alone, the imitation or the example of his life. . . . I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history, nor humanity, nor the ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary."

—Napoleon, cited by Vernon C. Grounds, *The Reason for Our Hope* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1945), p. 37.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. . . . "

"You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

—C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960), pp. 40–41.

LESSON 19

The Humiliation of Jesus Christ

The humiliation of Jesus Christ is defined as those self-humbling desires that caused Him to leave the glories of heaven, live on this sin-cursed earth, and die on an old rugged cross. His **humiliation** begins with His incarnation and ends with His burial. His **exaltation** begins with His resurrection and continues throughout all eternity.

A. The humiliation of Christ began with His incarnation.

1. Christ made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant.

> "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." *Phil. 2:5–8*

Jesus limited Himself and yet never ceased to be God; He willingly kept within Himself much of His power. He endured life as a human being in order to understand our trials.

2. Christ dwelt in the midst of sinful men.

The blessing of the incarnation is "God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

The blessing of heaven will also be "God with us" (Rev. 21:3).

3. Christ was born in humble Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).

Bethlehem is called "little among the thousands of Judah," and yet to this insignificant place Christ was born.

4. Christ was born in a humble stable (Luke 2:16).

Often the picture we have of the manger scene is far more glamorous than the reality of it. Our typical perspective includes a few cows, a wooden crib, sweet-smelling hay, freshly groomed shepherds, a star, and three wisemen. Nothing could

be further from the truth. Cattle are rare to Palestine; the wisemen came two years later; the star hovered over the **house** where the Christ-child was found by the wisemen; and the manger was most likely a stone feeding trough located in a stone cave, not a wooden stable. These caves were common throughout Palestine and were used for housing sheep while they were lambing.

The cave in which the Christ-child was born was probably adjacent to the crowded Bethlehem inn. It was customary for the innkeeper in Bible times not only to take care of the guest but also to provide for the horse or donkey which he had ridden to the inn. The cave in which Christ was born was probably a combination sheep-cote and "parking garage" for the inn itself. Therefore, if the inn was full on the night of Christ's birth, it would follow that the "parking garage" would also be packed with crowded, smelly animals.

We cannot imagine the humiliation of the night that Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Christ-child spent there. The stench was surely unbearable. It must have been nauseating to Mary and Joseph. Perhaps Joseph tried to clean up one corner of the cave to make it at least livable for a few days. During the day the animals would graze on the nearby hillsides, but at night they all crowded back into that same dark cave. What condescension Christ suffered for us!

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." *2 Cor. 8:9*

That Holy Thing

They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

—George MacDonald

B. The humiliation of Christ continued in His early life.

1. He was the son of poor Jewish parents.

"Is not this the carpenter's son?" *Matt. 13:55*

"They brought him [Christ] to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." *Luke 2:22, 24*

"This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles [doves], or two young pigeons: the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering." *Lev. 12:7–8*

By comparing the passage in Luke with the one in Leviticus, we can see that Mary and Joseph were not wealthy, but of a very low income. An average-income family would offer a lamb; poorer families brought turtledoves and pigeons. One bird was offered for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. It should also be noted that these were offered on behalf of Mary, not Christ. The sinless Son of God did not need a sin offering made on His behalf.

2. He was raised in Nazareth.

The Bible seems to indicate that the town of Nazareth was not viewed in a favorable light.

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" *John 1:46*

3. He was in subjection to human beings—His mother and foster father (Luke 2:51).

4. He was willingly subject to the limitations of a human body.

Although Jesus Christ was God, He did not use His divine power indiscriminately. When He did use His power, it was for the benefit of another. But until He began His ministry, He used no miraculous power. John 2:11 indicates that the turning of the water into wine was the "beginning of [His] miracles."

In spite of the Bible's clear teaching, some ancient apocry-

phal writings suggested that the young child Jesus "showed off" to His friends by performing miraculous "tricks" for their benefit. One such writer has Him turning clay pigeons into real birds to frustrate His teachers. Another writer suggested that He once turned a wicked schoolmate into stone to the delight of His friends. Such writings are not inspired and are not accurate. The Bible reveals that Jesus exercised patience and self-control in the first 30 years of His life. He willingly subjected Himself to the limitations of His human body.

C. The humiliation of Christ continued throughout His earthly ministry.

1. He suffered hunger and thirst (Matt. 4:1–7; 27:48).

Although He never met His own needs miraculously, He made sure others would not hunger (John 6:1–4) or thirst (John 4:6–15).

2. He was tried (tempted) continually.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted [tried] like as we are, yet without sin." *Heb. 4:15*

The word *tempted* should probably be translated *tried*. This often is the case throughout Scripture. See James 1:1–12. Christ could not be "tempted to sin" in all the ways that we are.

"But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." *James 1:14*

Christ could not be tempted to sin from within (lust). His temptation could only come from without. But those temptations from without were not victorious in the life of Christ. Christ is our great empathetic (characterized by the ability to share in another's feelings) High Priest because He was sinless. Sin mars an individual's ability to understand another's feelings. Our best empathy will come from a life **separated** from sin, not involved in sin. Christ **can** understand our trials; He **cannot** understand our inner sinful desires.

3. He was rejected by His own people.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."
John 1:11

4. He was often without suitable housing.

"And Jesus saith unto him, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." *Matt. 8:20*

Where did Jesus stay while He was on earth? It seems that He stayed with different individuals (Luke 10:38–42). He possibly stayed with different disciples. 1 Corinthians 9:5 seems to indicate that most of the apostles were married and had families.

"Have we not power [the right] to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as **other** apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas?" *1 Cor. 9:5*

Sparrow

"Yea, the sparrow hath found a house . . . even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God." *Ps. 84:3*

Both the Hebrew word *tsippor* and the Anglo-Saxon word *spearwa* refer to any small bird that flutters. This sparrow is the Palestinian house sparrow, building its nest in the Temple. Such birds were often trapped and eaten in the Mediterranean world, and Christ was referring to just such a pair of dead birds in Matthew 10:29.

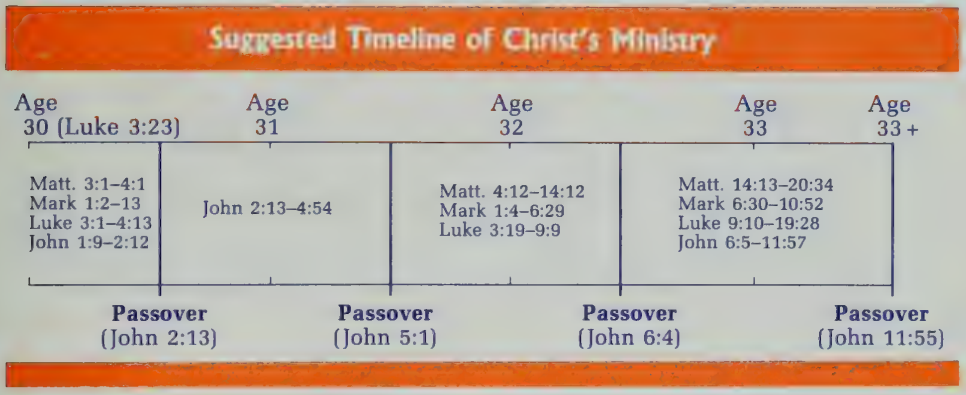
5. He was blasphemed.

"But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." *Luke 11:15*

6. He was made lower than the angels (Heb. 2:6–8).

D. The humiliation of Christ intensified during the week of His crucifixion.

1. He lived to be only 33 years of age (Luke 3:23ff).



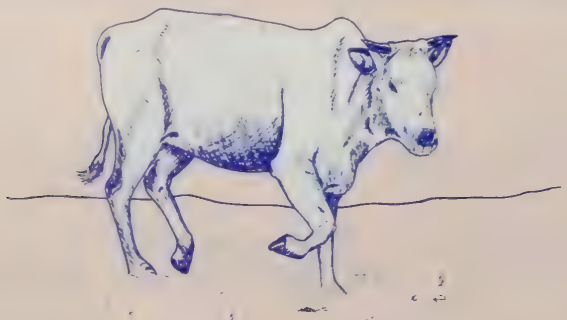
2. He rode on a borrowed donkey.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee, he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." *Zech. 9:9*

"And the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon." *Matt. 21:6–7*

3. He borrowed an upper room during the Passover.

"And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, the Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready." *Luke 22:11–12*



Cattle

"And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle." *Gen. 4:20*

Man has prized livestock or cattle (domestic bovines) since the early chapters of Genesis as beasts of burden and as sources of milk, meat, hides, horns, and manure (for fertilizer or fuel). In the Old Testament sacrificial system, young bulls (bullocks) and young cows (heifers) were among the most important sacrificial animals. The Judaic law provided rest for oxen (cattle used as draft animals) as well as people on the Sabbath and stipulated that a man could water his ox on the Sabbath without violating the Fourth Commandment. Three times in Scripture (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), God's provision of grain for hungry, plowing oxen is mentioned. Today, domestic cattle are still man's most important animal resource, and there is a world population of over 700 million bovines, 200 million of which live in India as sacred cows.

4. He was betrayed for a slave's price.

"If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned." *Ex. 21:32*

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot went into the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." *Matt. 26:14–15*

5. He was tortured unmercifully
(Matt. 27:26–56; Mark 15:7–41; Luke 23:13–49; John 19:1–37).

6. His followers denied Him.

"Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." *Matt. 26:56*

"And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not." *John 18:25*

E. The humiliation of Christ culminated in His burial in a borrowed tomb.

(Matt. 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:31–42)

"And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." *John 19:38–42*

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

What Thou, my Lord, has suffered,
Was all for sinner's gain:
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain:
Lo, here I fall, my Saviour!
'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
Vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

The joy can ne'er be spoken,
Above all joys beside,
When in Thy body broken
I thus with safety hide:
My Lord of life, desiring
Thy glory now to see,
Beside Thy cross expiring,
I'd breathe my soul to Thee.

What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee, dearest Friend?
For this, Thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
Oh, make me Thine forever;
And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never,
Outlive my love to Thee!

Be near when I am dying,
Oh, show Thy cross to me!
And for my succor flying,
Come, Lord, to set me free!
These eyes, new faith receiving,
From Jesus shall not move;
For he who dies believing,
Dies safely through Thy love.

—Bernard of Clairvaux
(d. 1153)

LESSON 20

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the climax of history. The Old Testament prepared us for it; the New Testament explained its significance. This lesson will discuss the events leading up to and culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for a world desperately in need of a Savior.

A. The court trial of Jesus Christ was illegal.

The court trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin was grossly illegal. Yet we must remember that **no fair trial** could ever have condemned the perfect Son of God. God can use the wrath of men to praise Him (Ps. 76:10). Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

1. **The events** on the night of the betrayal of Jesus actually included **three different "trials":**

   a. Christ was first brought before **Annas and the Sanhedrin** at night.

      It was during the night that Simon Peter denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:54–62; John 18:12–24).

   b. Annas sent Jesus to **Caiaphas (the High Priest) and the Sanhedrin** at dawn (Luke 22:66; John 18:24, 28).

   c. The Sanhedrin then led Jesus from its council to **Pilate the Roman governor** in the early morning hours (John 18:28–31).

The Jewish Sanhedrin

The main part of the "trial" of Jesus occurred before the Jewish Sanhedrin. This was the Jewish court of law. The Sanhedrin consisted of the following men (Mark 14:53):

2 presiding officers
23 chief priests
23 elders
23 scribes
71 total members

These Jewish leaders were considered experts in many fields. They had to be well versed in science, medicine, chemistry, and foreign languages. Since an interpreter was not allowed in the court, at least three members of the Sanhedrin had to be fluent in the language of each witness. History records that two Sanhedrins (one at Bither and another at Jabneh) had at least three members who knew **all the known languages** of their section of the world. These men were definitely not unlearned. The chief priests were experts in the moral law, the elders in the civil law, and the scribes in the ceremonial law.

The Sanhedrin imposed strict regulations upon itself in order to keep an innocent man from being unjustly accused. There was no such thing as circumstantial evidence. At least two witnesses were required to condemn a man. The Sanhedrin would not accept testimony from women, slaves, idiots, minors, blind men, gamblers, relatives, or Gentiles. The witnesses were isolated from each other until their time to testify. They then testified individually and before the accused. The witnesses had to agree in every minute detail of their testimonies or the accusations were rejected.

The accused could testify before the Sanhedrin, but it was not required. The accused individual's own confession was insufficient for his condemnation.

The Jewish Sanhedrin was not allowed to execute criminals for any crime. The Romans made it clear that they, not the Jews, had ultimate sovereignty at that time. Not only that, but at the time Christ was crucified the Jewish people had practically done away with capital punishment. The Mishna (Jewish law code) of that day stated: "The Sanhedrin which so often as once in seven years condemns a man to death, is a slaughter-house."

After the witnesses had completed their testimonies, the Sanhedrin began its voting procedures. Each member in turn stood and gave his verdict with a proper explanation. The youngest members always

voted first so as not to be influenced by the elder members of the Sanhedrin. Each succeeding member had to give arguments that were distinctively different from the previous members or his vote was not considered worthy of independent thinking.

In cases of capital punishment, the Sanhedrin was required to reconvene 24 hours later and vote again. If a member had voted "not guilty" the day before, he **could not change** his vote. But if he had voted "guilty" the day before he **could change** his verdict to "not guilty." (Again, this was to protect the accused. Often after a good night's rest, a Sanhedrin member would become more benevolent.)

2. The illegalities of Christ's trial

The following is a list of a few of the illegalities of which the Sanhedrin and the high priest were guilty. Mark 15:10 reminds us of their motives: "For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy."

a. The Sanhedrin met before the morning sacrifice.

This was illegal. They met at night to quickly push through a verdict of guilty. (The reason for such a self-imposed regulation as waiting till after the morning sacrifice should be obvious. The Jewish people wanted to make sure these men of the Sanhedrin were "right with God" before they handed down important decisions.)

b. The Sanhedrin was not to meet on Fridays (the day before the Sabbath) or before feast days regarding issues of capital punishment.

Since an issue of capital punishment may have required the Sanhedrin to reconvene the next day, they imposed this rule to keep from meeting on a Sabbath or a feast day.

c. The witnesses did not agree (Mark 14:56–59).

Being a witness was considered a serious matter to the Sanhedrin. In matters of capital punishment he was strongly challenged by a member of the Sanhedrin to tell the truth.

Warning to the Witness

"Forget not, O witness, that it is one thing to give evidence in a trial as to money and another in a trial for life. In a money suit, if the witness-bearing shall do wrong, money may repair that wrong. But in this trial of life, if thou sinnest, the blood of the accused and the blood of his seed to the end of time shall be imputed unto thee. . . . Therefore was Adam created one man and alone, to teach thee that if any witness shall destroy one soul out of Israel, he is held by the Scripture to be as if he had destroyed the world; and he who saves one such soul to be as if he had saved the world."

—cited by Walter M. Chandler, *The Trial of Jesus from a Lawyer's Standpoint* (Norcross, Georgia: The Harrison Company, Publishers, 1976), p. 79.

But what if the witness was guilty of perjury? The Old Testament gives us the answer:

> "And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; **Then shall ye do unto him,** as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you." *Deut. 19:18–19*

(The ones who should have been crucified the day Jesus died were the witnesses who falsely accused Him.)

d. The High Priest was forbidden to tear his clothes.

> "And he that is the high priest among his brethren . . . shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes." *Lev. 21:10*

> "Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?" *Mark 14:63*

e. Christ's defense was never allowed.

f. The judges should have been disqualified because of previous knowledge of the case.

(They had met on three previous occasions to conspire against Him.)

Cock

"Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." *Matt. 26:34*

By New Testament times, the cock or rooster had long since become an "alarm clock" on camel caravans and was widely used to tell time. In fact, the Jews even called one of their night watches "the cock crowing" (see Mark 13:35). Domestic fowl probably originated in India; one of the provisions of Solomon's table was "fatted fowl" which he may have imported from India (1 Kings 4:23).

g. The Sanhedrin never reconvened the next day.

(In reality they reconvened a few hours later at dawn.)

h. The Sanhedrin constantly changed the charge against Jesus.

(1) The first accusation was sedition.

"We heard him say, I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." *Mark 14:58*

What Christ actually said is found in John 2:19.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, [You] destroy this temple [of my body—vs. 21], and in three days I will raise it up."

(2) The second accusation was **blasphemy.**

"Then the high priest . . . saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?" *Mark 14:63–64*

(3) The third accusation was **treason.**

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King." *Luke 23:1–2*

i. According to Jewish law, a **unanimous** verdict of **guilty** was considered an **acquittal** (a setting free).

This is one of the most amazing aspects of Jewish law, but it is not without some logic. A unanimous and simultaneous verdict of guilty was considered a verdict lacking in mercy. It was thought to be the result of a conspiracy and mob violence rather than **mature judicial deliberation.** Christ's trial was indeed the result of a conspiracy.

"Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they **all** condemned him to be guilty of death." *Mark 14:64*

B. The treatment of Jesus Christ was most severe.

Following is a doctor's medical description of the suffering of Jesus during His crucifixion. It is given not to be sensational but to give each of us a new appreciation of the true humiliation of our precious Savior.

A Medical Description

The physical trauma of Christ begins in Gethsemane with one of the initial aspects of His suffering—the bloody sweat. It is interesting that the physician of the group, St. Luke, is the only one to mention this. He says, "And being in agony, He prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground."

Though very rare, the phenomenon of hemathidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning, Jesus, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, is taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia. It was there, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Bar-Abbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion.

Preparations for the scourging are carried out. The prisoner is stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs.

At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows.

Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this pro-

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous Cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His Blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet?
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

—Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

vincial Jew claiming to be a king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. A small bundle of flexible branches covered with long thorns is pressed into His scalp.

Again there is copious bleeding (the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body). After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from his back. This had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, causes excruciating pain—almost as though He were again being whipped, and the wounds again begin to bleed.

The heavy beam of the cross is then tied across His shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves and the execution detail, begins its slow journey. The weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance.

At Golgotha, the beam is placed on the ground and Jesus is quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats

the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The beam is then lifted in place at the top of the posts and the titulus reading "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" is nailed in place.

The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid the stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen.

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphixiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins. A deep crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

The compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues—the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasps, "I thirst."

He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. With one last surge of strength, He once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Apparently to make doubly sure of death, the legion-

naire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. Immediately there came out blood and water. We, therefore, have rather conclusive postmortem evidence that Our Lord died, not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

—Condensed from "The Crucifixion of Jesus" by C. Truman Davis, M.D., M.S. March, 1965 and quoted by Bill Gothard in *Men's Manual*, Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, Inc., Box One, Oak Brook, Ill. 60521, pp. 146–147. Reprinted by permission of Arizona Medical Association and Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, Inc.

C. The suffering of Jesus Christ was more than physical.

1. He died in the presence of sinners.

"They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion." *Ps. 22:13*

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me." *Ps. 22:16–17*

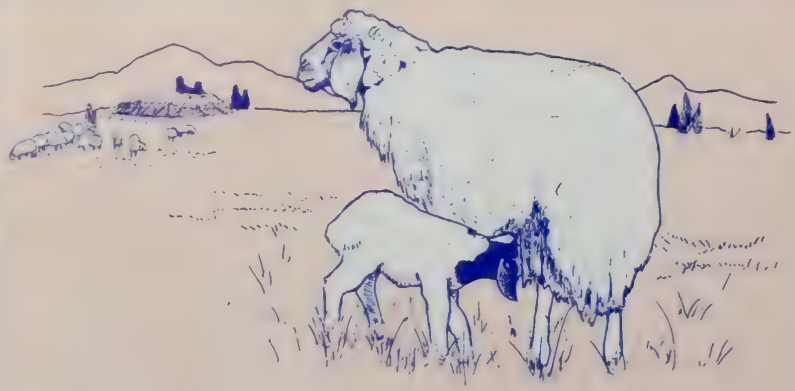
2. He suffered tremendous shame and embarrassment.

"I [Jesus Christ] hid not my face from **shame** and spitting." [illegible]

"Looking unto Jesus . . . who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the **shame.**" *Heb. 12:2*

"And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had plated a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head." *Matt. 27:28–30*

"And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." *Mark 15:27–28*



Sheep

"And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold he keepeth the sheep." *1 Sam. 16:11*

According to the Bible, man has kept sheep and goats almost from the very beginning (see Gen. 4:2, 4), and the Hebrews were skilled shepherds throughout their history. Sheep were kept for their meat, fat, and wool. In the Bible, Christ is portrayed as both the Shepherd and the Lamb of God, suffering and dying for the sins of His people, and Christians themselves are compared to sheep.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." *Isa. 53:7*

3. He was forsaken by God the Father (Ps. 22:1).

When Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself, a holy God could no longer look upon His Son. Up to that point Jesus addressed God as "Father." But as Jesus became sin for us, a change took place. Jesus could no longer call Him "Father," as Jesus on the cross was totally forsaken by God. In agony, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" At the ninth hour He cried, "It is finished," and the fellowship of Father and Son was restored. Jesus continued, "**Father,** into thy hands I commend my spirit."

4. He bore the sins of every man.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." *Heb. 2:9*

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

1 Pet. 2:24

5. He suffered an eternity in hell for every man.

When Adam sinned he died spiritually (he was separated from God). Therefore, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, it was necessary for Him to pay the "wages of sin," which is eternal separation from God in hell. From 12 noon to 3 p.m. Jesus suffered all the agony of hell for all mankind compacted into that three hour time span. Only an eternal God could do that. It is no wonder He cried out in agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" One of the most sobering verses in all the Bible reminds us of the results of God's turning His back on His only Son:

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God: . . . **who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,** and from the glory of his power." *2 Thess. 1:8–9*

God's Greatest Expression of Love

"The greatest example of one laying down his life for his friends is Christ. We can never fully comprehend the spiritual aspect of Christ's suffering and shame, but medical studies shed glimpses of light on the physical agony and all the horror that Jesus endured on the cross.

'For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.' *Hebrews 12:3*

'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' *John 15:13*

"If you are to truly love and make each member of your family successful, you must be willing to lay down your life on a daily basis and 'die' for them. This means putting the needs of your family first, above your rights, personal ambitions, and schedule."

—*Men's Manual*, Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, Inc., Box One, Oak Brook, Ill. 60521, pp. 146–147.

LESSON 21

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

A. The doctrine of the resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the act by which He, of His own will, came back to life bodily after His death and burial. It is of paramount importance to understand what the Bible teaches about this key doctrine.

1. The nature of the resurrection

a. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a **bodily resurrection.**

The Bible does not teach that it was merely Christ's spirit or influence that lived on. His was a **bodily resurrection.** On resurrection morning He was held by the feet (Matt. 28:9). One week later Thomas was able to touch the crucifixion scars of Jesus (John 20:25–28). In the presence of His disciples Jesus ate food (Luke 24:41–43). He was recognized by those who had known Him before His death (Luke 24:34–39). **The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the guarantee that someday we will experience a bodily resurrection.**

> "So when this corruptible [body] shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal [body] shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." *1 Cor. 15:54*

b. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a **unique resurrection.**

Others, like Lazarus, also experienced a resurrection. What made the resurrection of Jesus different? First, **he was resurrected by His own power.**

> "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." *John 10:17–18*

Secondly, Christ's resurrection was unique because **he**

arose, never to die again. Those who experienced resurrections during Bible times died a second time. They had not received a glorified body as yet.

Christ's resurrection was unique because **through Him all will someday experience a resurrection.**

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." *John 11:25*

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." *1 Cor. 15:20*

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." *John 5:28–29*

2. The **importance** of the resurrection

a. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and the claims of Christianity stand, or fall, together.

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." *1 Cor. 15:12–19*

b. The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of our resurrection.

"Jesus said unto her [Martha], I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth

and believeth in me shall never die."
John 11:25–26

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." *1 Cor. 15:20*

"In Christ shall all be made alive." *1 Cor. 15:22*

"Because I live, ye shall live also." *John 14:19*

c. Christ's claims would be worthless if He did not rise from the dead.

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must . . . be killed, and be raised again the third day." *Matt. 16:21*

"Jesus charged them saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." *Matt. 17:9*

"Jesus said . . . and the third day he shall be raised again." *Matt. 17:22–23*

"And Jesus . . . said . . . and the third day he shall rise again." *Matt. 20:17–19*

"But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." *Matt. 26:32*

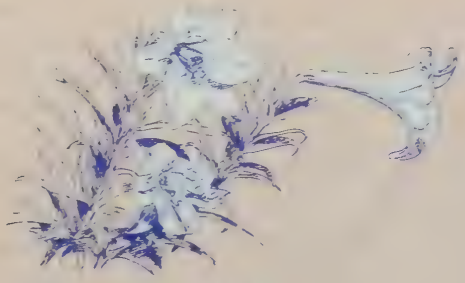
"When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." *John 2:22*

d. The resurrection is a vital part of the gospel.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, . . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." *1 Cor. 15:1–4*

e. The resurrection is a key doctrine of Christianity.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the theme of the apostles' preaching in the book of Acts (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30–37; 17:31) as well as of the apostle Paul's letters to the first century churches (Rom. 4:24; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:4; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:8).



Lily

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." *Hos. 14:5*

The lily of the Bible is the white lily, and as a symbol of beauty and fruitfulness it adorned the capitals of the columns in Solomon's Temple (See 1 Kings 7:19, 22). The lily is called the "rose of Sharon" in Song of Solomon 2:1. In New Testament times, the white lily became the "Easter lily," a symbol of spiritual purity, holiness, and the resurrection.

B. False teachings against the resurrection

An excellent way to see the strength of the evidence supporting the supernatural resurrection of Jesus Christ is to observe the ridiculous lengths to which the skeptic will go in attempting to disprove this key doctrine. Our confidence in God's Word is increased as we see man's meager attempts to discredit the Bible.

God used those who hated Christ the most to show that no trickery was involved. The zeal of the chief priests and Pharisees (Matt. 27:62–66) gave antagonistic confirmation to the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These four ideas of the skeptics came about as a result of their denial of a supernatural resurrection. As always happens when men reject the truth, the stories of these men are foolishness to those who know the Scriptures.

1. The theft lie

a. The skeptics' argument

According to this oldest lie about the resurrection, disciples stole Christ's body while the soldiers slept to make it look like a resurrection. The religious authorities paid the soldiers to tell this lie—Matthew 28:11–15.

b. The Scripture's answer

(1) It admits that the tomb of Jesus was empty.

If the theory can be disproved, it gives more credence to a resurrection. This shows the illogical position into which a skeptic is forced when he rejects the plain teaching of God's Word.

(2) It was the very thing the soldiers were guarding against (Matt. 27:62–66).

These soldiers would not have been inexperienced. They were either some of the best soldiers Rome had or they were a part of the carefully chosen Temple guard. If they couldn't defend the grave against a group of fishermen, then no one could!

(3) Falling asleep on watch was punishable by death for a Roman sentinel.

It is amazing that **any** guard would admit such miserable failure. Even if the guard were a Jewish temple guard, he was still held accountable to Pilate.

> "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you." *Matt. 28:13–14*

(4) If the soldiers were sleeping, how could they say the disciples stole the body?

> "The lie for which the priests paid so much money is **suicidal;** one half destroys the other. Sleeping sentinels could not know what happened." —A. B. Bruce

(5) It is nowhere suggested that the disciples were ever accused by any authority of stealing the body of Jesus.

Even though the lie was regularly told ("commonly reported among the Jews until this day"—Matt. 28:15), there is no record of anyone being convicted of theft. It should be obvious that the authorities of Christ's day knew the **absurdity** of such a claim.

Tertullian, in his *Apologeticus*, says: "The fame of our Lord's remarkable resurrection and ascen-

sion being now spread abroad, Pontius Pilate, according to an ancient custom of communicating novel occurrences to the emperor, that nothing might escape him, transmitted to Tiberius, Emperor of Rome, an account of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. . . . Tiberius referred the whole matter to the Senate, who, being acquainted with the facts, rejected it." The accuracy of this passage has not been challenged, even by those who staunchly reject the resurrection.

(6) The graveclothes testified to the impossibility of theft (John 20:1–8).

What did John "see" that caused him to "believe" a resurrection had taken place? The answer is found in the presence of the linen burial clothes. If the disciples had taken His body, why would they have taken the time to remove the graveclothes?

> "The graveclothes lying orderly in their place . . . made it evident that the sepulchre had not been rifled nor the body stolen by violent hands; for these garments and spices would have been of more value to thieves . . . at least, they would have not taken the trouble thus to fold them together. The same circumstances showed also that the body had not been removed by friends; for they would not thus have left the graveclothes behind."
>
> —Simon Greenleaf, *Testimony of the Evangelists, Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965 rep. of 1847 ed.), p. 542.

But what exactly did John see?

> "And the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." *John 20:7*

This indicated a resurrection. This would only be the arrangement if Christ's body had passed **through** the graveclothes and through the tomb. We know that this was the ability of Christ's post-resurrection body (See John 20:19, 26). The stone was not rolled away so Jesus could get out; the

stone was rolled away so that the disciples could see in! In a split second of time Jesus arose and the graveclothes collapsed or were like a large linen cocoon. And the separate napkin, separated naturally from the rest of the linen by a few inches, would be definitely "in a place by itself."

(7) The disciples did not expect a resurrection and therefore would have no need to fake one.

> "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done." *Luke 24:21*

They Died for the Truth

According to early historians, the apostles died the following martyrs' deaths:

1. **Peter** was crucified upside down.
2. **Andrew** was crucified.
3. **James** the son of Zebedee was killed by the sword.
4. **John** died a natural death, although he was persecuted and exiled by Domitian.
5. **Philip** was crucified.
6. **Bartholomew** was crucified.
7. **Thomas** was thrust through with a spear.
8. **Matthew** was killed by the sword.
9. **James** the son of Alphaeus was crucified.
10. **Thaddaeus** was killed by arrows.
11. **Simon** the Zealot was crucified.
12. **Paul** was beheaded.

The resurrection "was the belief that turned heartbroken followers of a crucified rabbi into the courageous witnesses and martyrs of the early church. This was the one belief that separated the followers of Jesus from the Jews and turned them into the community of the resurrection. You could imprison them, flog them, kill them, but you could not make them deny their conviction that 'on the third day he rose again.' "

—Michael Green, "Editor's Preface" in George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975).

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." *Luke 24:36–37*

(8) The disciples would not have died a martyr's death for the sake of a lie.

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." *Acts 12:1–2*

2. The swoon story

a. The skeptics' argument

According to this false teaching, Jesus never actually died on the cross. He just "fainted" and then the cool air of the tomb and the embalming spices revived Him from this unconscious state.

b. The Scripture's answer

(1) The soldiers, Joseph, and Nicodemus testified to His death.

(a) The soldiers (Mark 15:44–45; John 19:31–37)

This particular group probably had much experience at executions. They certainly would not make a mistake that crucial.

(b) Joseph

"This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen and laid it in a sepulchre." *Luke 23:52–53*

(c) Nicodemus

"And there came also Nicodemus, . . . Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices." *John 19:39–40*

(2) Victims of a crucifixion seldom recovered, even under the most favorable of circumstances of burial.

> "Do you really believe that lying for hour after hour with no medical attention in a rock-hewn tomb in Palestine at Easter, when it's quite cold at night, would so far have revived him, instead of proving the inevitable end to his flickering life, that he would have been able to loose himself from yards of graveclothes weighted with pounds of spices, roll away a stone that three women felt incapable of tackling, and walk miles on wounded feet?"
>
> —J. N. D. Anderson, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ" *Christianity Today*, March 29, 1968, p. 7.

(3) A weak, anemic appearance to His disciples would not have inspired their worship as it did.

(John 20:19–31)

On the very Sunday of His resurrection Jesus walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–18) and back again (Luke 24:33–36). The total distance of that trip would have been approximately 120 furlongs, or 13 miles. That would be an amazing amount of walking for anyone, let alone an individual who had "almost" died a few days earlier.

(4) It would make Jesus a wicked liar to allow a resurrection tale to spread if it were not true.

This is one of the most serious problems with the entire theory. Jesus Christ is either liar or Lord. If He were lying then, how could we accept **anything** He said? It must be either all or nothing. If He is to be our Savior, He must have lived a perfect life. That would include being a man of complete truthfulness. If He were a liar, then He cannot be our Lord and Savior.

(5) If He survived the crucifixion, then when and where did He die?

The skeptic cannot accept anything supernatural. But if he can't believe in a resurrection, he

also can't believe in an ascension. Then when did Christ die? There is no historical record of **any other** death, funeral service, grave marker, or burial of Jesus. George Hanson in *The Resurrection and the Life* states, "It is hard to believe that this was the favorite explanation of eighteenth-century rationalism." The theory is now almost obsolete because of the ridiculous nature of its premise.

(6) The chief priests and Pharisees, fearing such a deception, would have surely confirmed His death.
(Matt. 27:62–66)

The chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate to make sure "that deceiver" would not be able to "fake" a resurrection. They feared "the last error [would] be worse than the first." That fear caused Pilate to reply, "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can." It was the zeal of the chief priests and Pharisees that shows the folly of rejecting the resurrection. These men **knew** Christ was dead. They feared everything but the possibility He might revive.

3. The hallucination explanation

a. The skeptics' argument

According to this "theory," all of the eyewitnesses of Christ's post-resurrection appearances were actually hallucinating.

b. The Scripture's answer

(1) Were more than 500 people all hallucinating?
(1 Cor. 15:3–8)

(2) These appearances were seen by those who initially doubted the possibility of a resurrection.
(Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:31–39; John 20:25–29)

These eyewitnesses would have quickly dismissed anything other than an actual appearance of Jesus Christ. The doubting of Thomas shows the folly of this theory. He would have made sure Christ was a reality. Thomas' touching Christ's hands and side dispel forever the idea of a hallucination.

(3) Christ's followers believed what was against their wills to believe.

Their belief did not arise from within but from without, based on the evidence (Luke 24:13–31; John 20:15, 21).

4. The wrong tomb teaching

a. The skeptics' argument

According to this fable, the women, and subsequently everyone else, went to the wrong tomb.

b. The Scripture's answer

(1) The women carefully observed the burial (Mark 15:47).

(2) The women on Easter morning were concerned not with the tomb's location but with the weight of the stone (Mark 16:1–3).

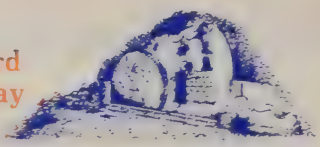
(3) The empty graveclothes suggest the correct tomb.

No other grave would have contained such an arrangement of linen clothes unless someone else had experienced a miraculous resurrection.

(4) If the women were wrong, the chief priests and Pharisees would have surely corrected them, thereby squelching any possible mistake (Matt. 27:62–66).

(5) Joseph of Arimathea could have easily corrected any mistake. (He owned the grave—Matt. 27:57–60.)

Christ the Lord Is Risen To-day



"Christ the Lord is risen to-day,"
Sons of men and angels say.
Raise your joys and triumphs high;
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply.

Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won.
Lo! our Sun's eclipse is o'er;
Lo! He sets in blood no more.

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell!
Death in vain forbids His rise:
Christ has opened Paradise.

Lives again our glorious King;
Where, O Death, is now thy sting?
Dying once, He all doth save;
Where thy victory, O Grave?

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head:
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the Cross, the grave, the skies!

What though once we perished all,
Partners in our parents' fall:
Second life we all receive,
In our heavenly Adam live.

Risen with Him, we upward move,
Still we seek the thing above,
Still pursue, and kiss the Son,
Seated on His Father's throne.

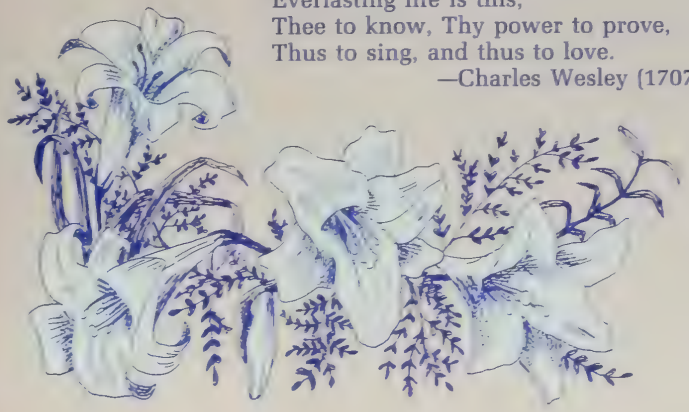
Scarce on earth a thought bestow;
Dead to all we leave below:
Heaven our aim, and loved abode,
Hid our life with Christ in God.

Hid, till Christ our Life appear,
Glorious in His members here:
Joined to Him, we then shall shine
All immortal, all divine.

Hail, the Lord of earth and heaven!
Praise to Thee by both be given:
Thee we greet triumphant now;
Hail, the Resurrection Thou!

King of glory, Soul of bliss,
Everlasting life is this,
Thee to know, Thy power to prove,
Thus to sing, and thus to love.

—Charles Wesley (1707–1788)



LESSON 22

The Exaltation of Jesus Christ

The exaltation of Jesus Christ is the act of God His Father by which the Father gave the Son the honor due Christ because of His deity. Because of God's exaltation of His Son, all believers will exalt Him forever.

> "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him [Jesus Christ], and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." *Phil. 2:9–11*

> "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." *Rev. 5:13*

A. The exaltation of Jesus Christ began with His resurrection.

After Christ's resurrection, the understanding of the disciples was greatly increased. They were able to exalt Him as God in a way vastly superior to their veiled attempts before His crucifixion. Thomas could testify, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Christ stayed on earth for forty days after His resurrection to give full proof of His deity and to aid the apostles in their exaltation of Him as they preached the gospel.

For this reason the eyewitness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ are significant. They gave power and substance to the messages of those early disciples. It is extremely difficult to deny the resurrection if over 500 people at different times and places were eyewitnesses of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ. The empty tomb stood readily available for inspecting by even the strongest of skeptics. The chronological order of His appearances is most likely this:

1. On the day of His resurrection He appeared to
   a. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:14)
   b. The women returning from the tomb (Matt. 28:9–10)
   c. Simon Peter (Luke 24:34)

d. The disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–33)

e. The apostles (Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–24)

2. Between the day of His resurrection and the day of His ascension He appeared to

a. Thomas (John 20:26–29)

b. Seven disciples by the Lake of Tiberias (John 21:1–23)

c. "Above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Cor. 15:6)

d. James (1 Cor. 15:7)

e. The eleven apostles (Matt. 28:16–20; 1 Cor. 15:7)

3. At His ascension (Acts 1:3–12)

The eleven apostles saw Him.

4. After His ascension He appeared to

   a. Stephen (Acts 7:55)

   b. Paul (Acts 9:3–6; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8)

   c. John on the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:10–19)

Alleged Discrepancies

Some have attempted to find in the gospels contrary accounts of the eyewitnesses to the resurrection. The fact is that God did not have each of the writers of the gospels include exactly the same details as all the others. Each of the gospel writers was given a different point of view of Christ's life and ministry. As a result, each writer stressed certain events while disregarding other events.

Here is an illustration of this perfectly normal procedure.

> "A class in history was studying the French Revolution, and the pupils were asked to look the matter up, and report next day **by what vote** Louis XVI was condemned. Nearly half the class reported that the vote was **unanimous.** A considerable number protested that he was condemned by a **majority of one.** A few gave the **majority of 145** in a vote of 721. How utterly irreconcilable these reports seemed! Yet for each the authority of reputable historians could be given. In fact, **all were true,** and the full truth was a combination of all three.
>
> "On the first vote as to the king's **guilt** there was no contrary voice. Some tell only this. The vote on the **penalty** was given individually, with reasons, and a majority of 145 declared for the death penalty, at once or after peace was made with Austria, or after confirmation by the people. The votes for **immediate** death were only 361 as against 360. History abounds with similar illustrations."
>
> —*Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct. 1907, pp. 768–9) and referred to in *The Resurrection of Jesus* by James Orr, pp. 90–91.

B. The exaltation of Jesus Christ continued with His ascension.

The ascension of Jesus Christ was the return of Jesus Christ to heaven forty days after His resurrection (Acts 1:9–11).

1. The circumstances of the ascension

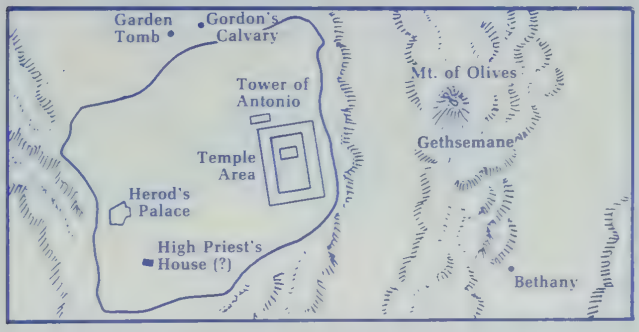
a. It occurred forty days after His resurrection.

> "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days." *Acts 1:3*

b. It occurred on the top of Mt. Olivet.

> "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey." *Acts 1:12*

Mt. Olivet or the Mount of Olives is approximately one mile east of Jerusalem and is about 2,700 feet above sea level. Its name came from the number of olive trees that were found on its slopes.



In the Old Testament it is mentioned very few times (2 Sam. 15:30; 2 Kings 11:7ff; 23:13; Zech. 14:4). Most of the New Testament references occur during the Passion week (beginning with His triumphal entry on Sunday and ending with His resurrection the following Sunday) and thereafter. It was located near Bethany, the hometown of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane, located on the western slopes of Mt. Olivet, that Jesus prayed on the night of His betrayal.

Its future significance is found in Zechariah 14:4.

> "And his feet shall stand in that day [Christ's second coming] upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." *Zech. 14:4*

On July 11, 1927, an earthquake shook Palestine from its southern border to the Sea of Galilee. The result was a fault running from east to west under the Mount of Olives. As a result a well-known hotel chain concluded that building a hotel on the top of the Mount of Olives was far too risky.

c. It was prophetic of His second coming.

> "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." *Acts 1:11*

In God's Word **clouds** were always associated with the presence of Deity. In the Old Testament a cloud in the Temple indicated the presence of God.

> "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord." *1 Kings 8:10–11*

As clouds accompanied His ascension, so clouds will accompany His return to earth. These clouds are a reminder that Jesus Christ is God.

> "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." *Rev. 1:7*

Olive

"But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" *Judg. 9:9*

The olive, the most important tree to people living in Bible times, is a symbol of peace, new life, and hope. The olive and its oil were part of the daily diet, and olive oil was also used as fuel in lamps and as a medicinal ointment for the body. Because kings and priests were anointed with olive oil, it became one of the emblems of the Holy Spirit.

2. The importance of the ascension

a. It provided the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." *John 16:7*

Jesus Christ said that it was best (expedient) for us that He go back to heaven. His ascension would allow the Comforter (Holy Spirit) to come in a limitless way, guiding each Christian into all truth.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

b. It provided the unlimited power of Jesus Christ as our Intercessor.

While on earth Christ willingly limited His omnipotence, but now in heaven His power is not limited. Each Christian now has the wonderful privilege of Jesus Christ as his **Intercessor.** As our Intercessor He pleads our case before a holy God on the basis of His shed blood on Calvary.

"He ever liveth to make intercession for them." *Heb. 7:25*

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." *1 Tim. 2:5*

"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." *1 John 2:1*

C. The exaltation of Jesus Christ will continue in the future.

1. Jesus will ultimately return in power.

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." *2 Thess. 2:8*

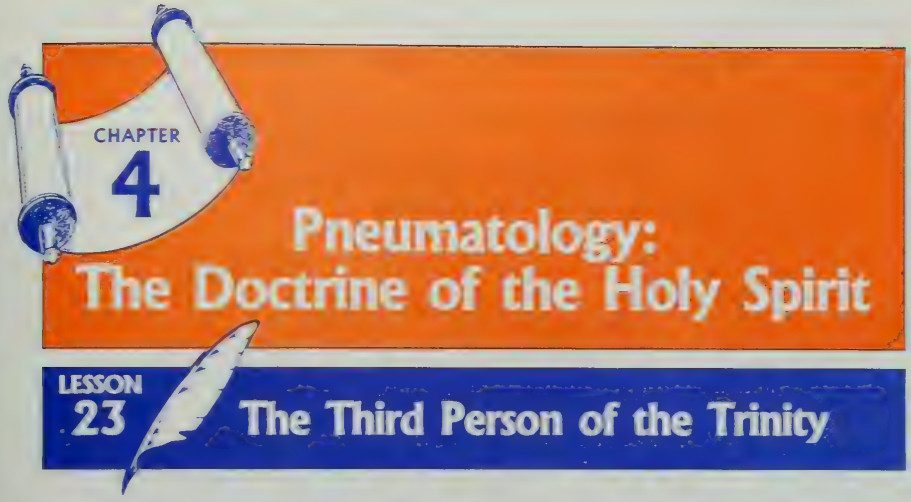
2. Jesus will reign on earth for one thousand years.

"They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." *Rev. 20:4, 6*

3. Jesus will be the object of glory and honor in heaven for all eternity.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and [illegible] earth, and things under the earth; And that every [illegible] hould confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the [illegible] Father." *Phil. 2:9–11*

[illegible] Lamb that was slain to receive power, [illegible] sdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." *Rev. 5:12*



The word **pneumatology** comes from two Greek words, ***pneuma,*** meaning "spirit," and ***logos,*** meaning "doctrine." Hence, pneumatology is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. One of the most misunderstood doctrines of the Bible is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The student will do well to carefully study what the Bible reveals to us about the Holy Spirit, our Comforter.

A. The Holy Spirit is a Person.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. That does not mean that He is inferior to the Father or the Son. It is simply an expression that is used because of the order in which the Trinity is most often found in the Bible (Matt. 28:19–20; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Some view the Holy Spirit as a force or as a power, not as a Person. This opinion has arisen partly because of the King James Version translators' use of the word *it* in reference to the Spirit. The word *spirit* in the Greek language is in the neuter gender. Every noun in Greek has a gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter). But **gender does not imply personality.** In the Greek language, inanimate cities are often in the feminine gender. In the German language, one of the words for *girl* is in the neuter gender. In the English language, we often refer to ships and cities as feminine.

The translators of the King James Version occasionally referred to the Holy Spirit as *it* (Rom. 8:26) to remind us that a pronoun must agree with its antecedent in gender and number (singular or plural). Since the antecedent (*Spirit*) was neuter, the pronoun (*it*) must be neuter as well.

1. The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by His names.

a. *Comforter*

This word (***paraclete*** in the Greek) means one "called to your side," as a lawyer.

"But the **Comforter,** which is the Holy Ghost, shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." *John 14:26*

"But when the **Comforter** is come, . . . even the Spirit of truth, . . . he shall testify of me." *John 15:26*

b. *Guide*

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will **guide** you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." *John 16:13*

Dove

"Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground." *Gen. 8:8*

Doves and pigeons belong to the same family (*Columbidae*) and are easily the most important birds in the Bible, being widely kept as domestic birds and used by the poor as sacrifices. Since doves are strict vegetarians, Noah sent out a dove to see if the waters had receded sufficiently to expose trees and other vegetation. The dove is an emblem of the Holy Spirit, as at Christ's baptism (see Matt. 3:16, 17).

c. *Intercessor*

The Holy Spirit intercedes (pleads) for us during our prayer time.

> "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."
>
> *Rom. 8:26–27*

The Intercession of the Holy Spirit

1. We are too sinful to understand what we really need (Rom. 8:26).
2. The Holy Spirit knows the will of the Father for our lives (Rom. 8:27).
3. As we submit to the Lord's will, His will becomes our will (Rom. 8:27).
4. The Holy Spirit prays with us for the requests we truly need (Rom. 8:27).

Thus our prayers will be answered and everything in our lives will work together for God's ultimate good (Rom. 8:28).

2. The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by His characteristics.

a. He has a will.

> "The selfsame Spirit, [is] dividing to every man severally **as he will.**" *1 Cor. 12:11*

b. He has a mind.

> "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is **the mind** of the Spirit." *Rom. 8:27*

c. He has great knowledge (John 14:26; 15:26; 1 Cor. 2:10–13).

> "The Holy Ghost . . . **shall teach you all things.**"
>
> *John 14:26*

d. He has speech ability (Acts 1:16; 28:25; Rev. 2:7, 11).

"Well **spake** the Holy Ghost by Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet." *Acts 28:25*

e. He has sensibilities.

(1) He can be grieved by the Christian (Eph. 4:30).

The word *grieve* in Ephesians 4:30 is the same word used of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane the night He was betrayed. It means "to make sad or sorrowful." Ephesians 4:31 reveals what grieves the Holy Spirit: "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking." By allowing the "little" sins of bitterness and anger to take root, the believer grieves the heart of the Holy Spirit.

(2) He can be lied to by the Christian (Acts 5:3).

(3) He can be quenched by the Christian (1 Thess. 5:19).

(4) He can be resisted by the unsaved (Acts 7:51).

(5) He can be blasphemed by the unsaved (Matt. 12:31).

(6) He can be insulted by the unsaved (Heb. 10:29).

3. **The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by His abilities.**

a. He **teaches.**

"The Holy Ghost . . . shall teach you all things." *John 14:26*

b. He **guides.**

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." *Rom. 8:14*

c. He **commissions.**

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed." *Acts 13:4*

d. He **intercedes.**

"[illegible]lf maketh intercession." *Rom. 8:26*

e. He **commands.**

"[illegible] Spirit said unto Philip, Go near." *Acts 8:29*

f. He restrains.

"My spirit [Holy Spirit] shall not always strive with man." *Gen. 6:3*

g. He loves.

"for the love of the Spirit" *Rom. 15:30*

4. The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by the unusual grammar of the New Testament.

Although the word for *Spirit* is in the neuter gender, there are times when a masculine pronoun is used to refer to Him. This seems to be the case whenever one of the Holy Spirit's duties is being revealed. This exception to grammatical rules indicates that the Bible views the Holy Spirit as a Person. In John 14:16, Jesus Christ used the masculine pronoun in referring to the Comforter.

B. The Holy Spirit is God.

1. The divine names for the Holy Spirit show that He is God.

a. The Spirit is called "God."

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the **Holy Ghost.** . . . thou hast not lied unto men, but unto **God.**" *Acts 5:3–4*

b. The Spirit is called "Lord."

"But we . . . are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." *2 Cor. 3:18*

c. The Spirit is on an equality with the Father and the Son.

"baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" *Matt. 28:19*

2. The divine attributes of the Holy Spirit show that He is God.

a. He is **eternal.**

> "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the **eternal** Spirit offered himself without spot to God . . . purge your conscience."
> *Heb. 9:14*

b. He is **omniscient.**

> "The Spirit searcheth **all** things, yea, the deep things of God." *1 Cor. 2:10*

> "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, . . . shall teach you **all** things." *John 14:26*

c. He is **omnipotent.**

> "By his spirit [Holy Spirit] he hath garnished the heavens; his hand formed the crooked serpent."
> *Job 26:13*

> "And the angel answered and said unto her, The **Holy Ghost** shall come upon thee and the **power** of the Highest shall overshadow thee. . . . For with God nothing shall be impossible." *Luke 1:35–37*

d. He is **omnipresent.**

> "Whither shall I go from thy spirit [Holy Spirit]? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? . . . If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."
> *Ps. 139:7–10*

e. He is **holy.**

It is often forgotten that His name contains one of His important attributes. He is God; therefore He is holy. It should be remembered always that the One Who is present with us at all times is **holy.**

f. He is **truth.**

> "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because it is truth." *1 John 5:6*

g. He is life.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." *Rom. 8:2*

h. He is wisdom.

"Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" *Isa. 40:13*

i. He is sovereign.

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally (individually) as he will." *1 Cor. 12:11*

In the context, this passage is dealing with spiritual gifts. The point is that the Holy Spirit is sovereign. No one can demand a certain spiritual gift. Although each Christian does have a spiritual gift given to him by the Spirit, it is important to note that **the Spirit determines** what that gift will be.

The Most Miserable Person

Who is the most miserable person in the world? One might answer that the wicked, unsaved person surely must be because he is on his way to hell. But that is not true. The unsaved can enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). However, the true Christian cannot. The moment he accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in his life. He can no longer enjoy a life of sin. Therefore, a Christian who is not right with God is the most miserable person in the world. His own carnal desires will not let him enjoy his Christianity, and the Holy Spirit will not let him enjoy his sin.

LESSON 24

The Holy Spirit's Past and Present Work

A. The Holy Spirit's work in the past

1. In creation

Each member of the Godhead was present and active in the creation of the world and mankind. This included the Holy Spirit.

"And the **Spirit** of God moved upon the face of the waters." *Gen. 1:2*

"And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness." *Gen. 1:26*

"Thou sendest forth thy **spirit** [Holy Spirit], they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." *Ps. 104:30*

"By his **spirit** [Holy Spirit] he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent." *Job 26:13*

"The **Spirit** of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." *Job 33:4*

2. In the inspiration of the Scriptures

One of the Holy Spirit's most important works was the inspiration of the Bible through approximately 40 men of God over a period of 1,500 years. His very name, *Spirit* ("Breath"), reminds us of the definition of inspiration ("God-breathed").

David himself said **by the Holy Ghost**. The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make enemies thy footstool." *Mark 12:36* quoting *Ps. 110:1*

and brethren, this scripture must needs have been which **the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David** spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. . . . For it is written in the book of Psalms, habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell and his bishoprick let another take." *Acts 1:16–20* quoting *Ps. 69:25*

"After that Paul had spoken one word, **Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias** [Isaiah] the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross." *Acts 28:25–27* quoting *Isa. 6:9–10*

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as **they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**" *2 Pet. 1:21*

3. In the Lord's work

Throughout the centuries the Holy Spirit has been actively empowering Christians for special tasks. As these Christians yield their lives to the Lord, they experience the joy of knowing the Holy Spirit's power in their lives. The power of the Holy Spirit is not for the preaching ministry alone. All responsibilities in the Lord's work need the power of the Holy Spirit behind them if they are to glorify God and count for eternity.

a. Bezaleel was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have **filled him with the Spirit of God.**" *Ex. 31:2–3*

"See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel . . . And he hath **filled him with the spirit of God** . . . in all manner of workmanship; And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in the cutting of stones . . . And **he hath put in his heart that he may teach.**" *Ex. 35:30–34*

God called this man, Bezaleel, to work in manual labor and teach those skills to others. The preacher is not the only one who needs the power of God in his life. If God impresses upon a person a ministry of labor, or teaching, that person will need the power of the Holy Spirit as much as any other Christian.

b. Gideon was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." *Judg. 6:34*

Gideon felt totally inadequate for the job he was called by God to do (Judg. 6:13–15). With the Spirit's help,

Gideon and his three hundred men were able to win a great victory over the Midianites. The Christian soldier in today's world needs the power of the Holy Spirit as much as anyone else.

c. Samson was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Although we usually think of Samson as a poor example of a Christian worker, several facts should be remembered:

(1) His name is included in the "Faith Chapter," Hebrews 11 (verse 32).

(2) He judged Israel for 20 years (Judg. 16:31).

(3) His two major failures occurred toward the end of his 20-year judgeship.

(4) He was filled with the Spirit on at least four occasions (Judg. 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).

He is the only judge of which this is recorded.

d. David was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."
1 Sam. 16:13

e. It is important to realize that Christians of all ages need the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

B. The Holy Spirit's work in the present

1. Foretold by Jesus

Jesus foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit:

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood [illegible] g. If any man thirst, let him come unto [illegible] k. He that believeth on me, as the scripture [illegible] f his belly shall flow rivers of living water. [illegible] of the Spirit, which **they that believe on him should receive:** for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"
John 7:37–39

Quenching the Holy Spirit

"Quench not the Spirit." *1 Thess. 5:19*

The power of the Holy Spirit can be quenched by sin in the believer's life. Saul and David are both Old Testament examples of this truth.

"But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul." *1 Sam. 16:14*

"Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." (David's prayer of confession in Ps. 51:11)

David's sin with Bathsheba destroyed his testimony with others. He needed the Holy Spirit's power in order to again have a successful ministry.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." *Ps. 51:12–13*

When Jesus was glorified after His resurrection that evening in the upper room, He breathed upon the disciples, signifying the coming of the Holy Spirit to every Christian.

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." *John 20:22*

Since then every truly born-again Christian receives the Person of the Holy Spirit at his conversion.

2. In salvation

When an individual receives Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, he also receives the Holy Spirit to dwell in his body. The following Scriptures teach this important truth.

"For in him [Jesus Christ] dwelleth **all** the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are **complete** in him, which is the head of all principality and power." *Col. 2:9–10*

There is no need for a subsequent reception of the Holy Spirit into our lives. He comes in at salvation. There is no need to pray for the Holy Spirit's **presence** in our lives, although we need to daily pray for His **power** and **fullness** in our lives.

At Pentecost the disciples did not "pray down the Spirit." They were commanded by the Lord to **"wait** for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). The Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost was according to God's schedule. Pentecost was the fiftieth day after the offering of the barley sheaf (Feast of Firstfruits) during the Passover week. Just as Jesus Christ came "in the fulness of the time" at Bethlehem (Gal. 4:4), so the Holy Spirit also came in God's perfect timing at the Feast of Pentecost.

"For by one **Spirit** are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one **Spirit.**"
1 Cor. 12:13

The Greek verbs in 1 Corinthians 12:13 are in the aorist tense, signifying a once-for-all occurrence. It is significant that we are never commanded to "receive the Holy Spirit," but we are commanded in Ephesians 5:18 to "Be filled with the Spirit"; that is, we are to allow the Holy Spirit to have His full reign in our lives.

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are **sealed** unto the day of redemption." *Eph. 4:30*

At salvation the Holy Spirit gives us a guarantee that someday "this corruptible" [body] will "put on incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:53). Our body is finally changed (Rom. 8:22–23).

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the **Spirit** of God dwelleth in you?" *1 Cor. 3:16*

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the **Holy Ghost** which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" *1 Cor. 6:19*

3. In sanctification

Sanctification is the act of setting apart something or someone from the world and unto God's service. It is a work that only the Holy Spirit of God can do. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, He purifies our lives and uses us for God's work.

The phrase ***filling of the Spirit*** is often used to describe this process of sanctification. We are **commanded** to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but **be filled with the Spirit.**" *Eph. 5:18*

The command of Ephesians 5:18 "be filled with the Spirit" is in the Greek present tense which denotes **a continual process** for the Christian. The more we yield to Him, the more He can use us. Without the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, our service for God will reap only wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:11–17).

The Liberty of the Spirit

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." *2 Cor. 3:17*

"Those who misunderstand law and grace often call those who have standards and strong convictions "legalists." In so doing, they reveal their misunderstanding of the Scriptures. . . .

"They would say that since the coming of the Holy Spirit during this age, rules are no longer important and that standards are of little value, but they misunderstand 2 Corinthians 3:17. . . . The liberty here is not talking about the liberty of the believer. God is not saying here that where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty for the believer to do as he wills. He is talking about where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty for the Holy Spirit to work and do as HE wills.

"These students of the Bible also would lead us to believe that in this age all of the rules and standards have been broken down. . . . They are wrong, however, in their teaching that God's expectations of us and from us are less than they were in the Old Testament. . . . We are now under the law of love. However, God expects more from us under the law of love than He did under the written law (see Matt. 5:17–44).

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." *2 Cor. 3:6*

"These words teach us clearly that we are to do the same in this age of the law of love and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus as we were to do under

the law of sin and death. However, there is a DIFFERENT REASON for our actions. . . . Basically, the difference between the old law and the new law is that we have just changed reasons for doing the same thing. . . .

"Here is a teenager who is made to iron her dad's shirts. She doesn't want to, but she has character and so she obeys the orders given to her by her parents. Then one day she gets married. Now she irons the same number of shirts that she ironed before, but she does it through love. She doesn't have the liberty to quit ironing shirts; she irons shirts just as she always did, but now she does it through love, not through the letter of the law. The same standard prevails, but there is a different reason and incentive.

"The story is told of slaves who were emancipated by Abraham Lincoln and yet who chose to return to their masters and serve them as they always had. These were called bond slaves. Hence, should not we in this age have stricter standards and go beyond those of the letter of the law?

"God has not changed His mind about right and wrong. What was wrong in the Old Testament is wrong in the New. What was wrong 3,500 years ago is wrong today. . . .

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." *2 Cor. 3:17*

"We are not the ones who have that liberty mentioned in this verse; 'tis the Holy Spirit Who has the liberty to tell us what to do! This means, where the Spirit of the Lord is in a life, the Holy Spirit may feel free to have liberty to control us and to command us."

—Jack Hyles, *Meet the Holy Spirit* (Hammond, Ind.: Hyles-Anderson Publishers, 1982), pp. 123–128.

LESSON 25

The Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit

A. Introduction

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is a wonderful reality. He not only provides us with abilities to serve God more effectively but also helps us to mature as Christians by refining spiritual qualities in our lives. These spiritual advantages are revealed in two passages of Scripture. 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 outlines nine special gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to believers. Galatians 5:22–23 discusses nine graces which make up the fruit (evident result) of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

"For to one is given by the Spirit **the word of wisdom**; to another **the word of knowledge** by the same Spirit; To another **faith** by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of **healing** by the same Spirit; To another the **working of miracles**; to another **prophecy**; to another **discerning of spirits**; to another divers kinds of **tongues**; to another the **interpretation** of tongues:

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." *1 Cor. 12:4–11*

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." *Gal. 5:22–23*

Nine Gifts (1 Cor. 12:4–11)	Nine Graces (Gal. 5:22–23)
1. wisdom	1. love
2. knowledge	2. joy
3. faith	3. peace
4. healing	4. longsuffering
5. miracles	5. gentleness
6. prophecy (preaching)	6. goodness
7. discerning	7. faith
8. tongues (languages)	8. meekness
9. interpretation	9. temperance

There are important distinctions between the gifts and the graces (fruit of the Spirit).

Distinctions between the Gifts and the Graces

	Nine Gifts	Nine Graces
1.	Each gift is distinct.	All nine graces make up the fruit of the Spirit.
2.	God determines which gift to give each believer.	God wants the believer to have all nine of these graces.
3.	The gift equips the believer for service.	The fruit consists of important character qualities.
4.	Gifts are represented in every church.	These graces are to be represented in every Christian.
5.	The ultimate purpose of gifts is power in soulwinning.	Their purpose is maturity of the Christian so that the world will see a difference in the believer.

B. The gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4–11)

Spiritual gifts are "extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit." —J. H. Thayer

1. Every believer has one spiritual gift.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to **every man** to profit withal." *1 Cor. 12:7*

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to **every man** severally as he will." *1 Cor. 12:11*

2. Each spiritual gift is given by the sovereign choice of the Holy Spirit.

No Christian has a right to ask for a particular gift.

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally **as he will.**" *1 Cor. 12:11*

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, **as it hath pleased him.**" *1 Cor. 12:18*

3. Each spiritual gift is important because of the Giver, not the receiver.

> "And there are differences of administration, but **the same Lord.**" *1 Cor. 12:5*
>
> "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit." *1 Cor. 12:11*

For this reason, no one has a right to boast in his spiritual gift. The Christian is just the instrument; the power comes from God.

4. The great diversity of spiritual gifts brings unity to the body of Christ.

> "But now are they many members, yet but one body." *1 Cor. 12:20*

It is clear from Scripture that we as Christians need each other. We cannot all be the "eye" in the body of Christ, nor can we all be the "foot." God uses the analogy of the human body to show the importance of every member of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–27).

5. No one should compare his spiritual gift with the spiritual gift of another.

> "Nay, much more those members of the body, **which seem to be more feeble,** are necessary: And those members of the body, **which we think to be less honourable,** upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but **God hath** tempered the body together, having **given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:** That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." *1 Cor. 12:22–25*

6. God's spiritual gift will never guide you contrary to God's Word.

Some might think that God's gift of wisdom, knowledge, or discernment might supersede what God has revealed in His Word. But the "same Lord" and "the selfsame Spirit" which gave us God's Word are the Ones who give the diversity of gifts.

We should never be guilty of accusing the Holy Spirit of "leading us" in a direction which is contrary to God's Word. The Holy Spirit will never lead a person to marry an unsaved person. God has already spoken on that subject (2 Cor. 6:14). We should never use "spirituality" as an excuse for disobedience (1 Sam. 15:1–35).

> "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." *Matt. 15:8*

The Gift of Languages

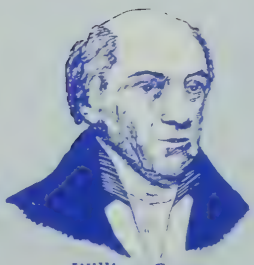
One of the Holy Spirit's special gifts to certain Christians is the gift of languages. Men and women fluent in several languages have been used by God in the translation and transmission of His Word to a needy world. Three examples of men who had the gift of languages are William Tyndale, William Carey, and Robert Dick Wilson.

William Tyndale

If the history of the English Bible can be traced to one man, that man would be **William Tyndale** (1490–1536), one blessed by God with the gift of languages. Although John Wycliffe had translated the first English Bible from the Latin, Tyndale believed it was important to translate the Bible from the original languages. Therefore, he became very proficient in the languages of the Bible. His contemporary, Herman Buschius, once said of Tyndale, "he was so skilled in seven languages, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, French, that whichever he spoke you would suppose it his native tongue." In his lifetime Tyndale almost singlehandedly translated the entire New Testament and half of the Old Testament, leaving notes for the translation of the remainder with his accomplices.

> "The English Bible as it has been handed down to us in the King James Version, dependent for the most part upon Tyndale's translation, is a unique phenomenon. The English language and literature grew into beauty and excellence by slow processes just as other languages and literature have done, except for the fact that in England Tyndale's translation of the Bible was the lens which caught and focused all the rays from many sources. This con-

William Tyndale



William Carey

Robert Dick Wilson

centration upon one spot through the genius of one man's mind can be accounted for only by the fact that racial and **linguistic elements were welded together by the living spirit,** finding their final expression in Tyndale's personality."

. . .

"He was the man of the hour. Yet creative genius does not know hours and minutes, it only knows opportunities. Here was the opportunity and Tyndale seized it. His translation is said to have had a greater influence on the English language and civilization than any other vernacular Bible has had on any other nation, for both civilization and language were then in just the stage to be formed by such a vigorous expression of Holy Writ."

—Laura H. Wild, *The Romance of the English Bible* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran, & Co., 1929), pp. 56, 143–144.

William Carey

The Holy Spirit's gift of languages to **William Carey** (1761–1834), the father of modern missions, allowed him to translate the Bible and transmit the gospel to many who had never heard. As a young man Carey taught himself Greek, Latin, French, and Dutch so he could read for himself the great literature of these languages. His God-given linguistic ability was to be an invaluable aid to him as he began his missionary work in India.

Within just a few years of his arrival in India he became so proficient in the Indian languages that he became the Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of Fort Williams, Calcutta. He continued his study of the Indian dialects in order to win more people to Christ. To help the Indians reach their own people, he wrote grammar books in six different languages, as well as textbooks and dictionaries.

But his greatest goal was to translate the Bible into every language of India.

> "Shortly after the establishment of Dr. Carey and his brethren at Serampore, they devised and carried into execution a comprehensive scheme for the translation of the Scriptures into all the languages of India. Accordingly, they published, in the course of about five-and-twenty years, translations of portions of the Old and New Testament, more or less considerable, in **forty different dialects.**"
>
> —H. H. Wilson

Robert Dick Wilson

Robert Dick Wilson (1856–1930) used God's gift of languages to challenge the critics of God's Word. By the time he was 25 years old, he could read the New Testament in nine different languages. Upon graduation from Princeton Seminary, Wilson studied in Germany to learn languages not taught anywhere in the United States. He soon could repeat from memory a Hebrew translation of the entire New Testament as well as large portions of the Hebrew Old Testament. After he had learned 45 ancient languages and dialects fluently, Robert Dick Wilson offered this challenge to the critics of the Old Testament:

> "I defy any man to make an attack upon the Old Testament on the ground of evidence that I cannot investigate. I can get at the facts if they are linguistic. If you know any language that I do not know, I will learn it."

Yet this linguistic genius never forgot the simplicity of God's wonderful message to all mankind.

> "One of the stirring moments in the experience of his students occurred when, after a dissertation on the complete trustworthiness of Scripture, the renowned scholar said with tears: 'Young men, there are many mysteries in this life I do not pretend to understand, many things hard to explain. But I can tell you this morning with the fullest assurance that
>
> 'Jesus loves me, this I know
> For the Bible tells me so.' "
>
> —Henry W. Coray

C. The graces of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." *Gal. 5:22–23*

The *fruit* (singular) is made up of nine Christian *graces* (characteristics). They all need to be a part of the Christian's walk. Just like the notes of a musical scale, all must be present in order to have a harmonious Christian life. ***The key to the fruit of the Spirit is love.***

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." *Matt. 22:37*

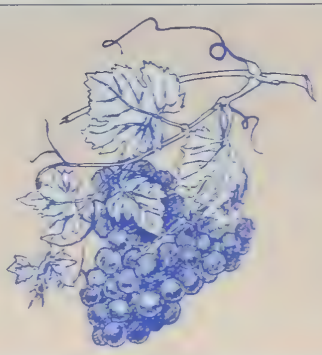
The great love chapter (1 Cor. 13) shows that with love as the root, all of the Christian graces can blossom into fruit in the Christian's life.

	Root (Love) 1 Corinthians 13:4–13	Fruit Galatians 5:22–23
1.	"The greatest of these is charity [love]." (v. 13)	Love
2.	"rejoiceth in the truth" (v. 6)	Joy
3.	"is not easily provoked" (v. 5)	Peace
4.	"suffereth long" (v. 4)	Longsuffering
5.	"is kind" (v. 4)	Gentleness
6.	"thinketh no evil" (v. 5)	Goodness
7.	"believeth all things" (v. 7)	Faith
8.	"seeketh not her own" (v. 5)	Meekness
9.	"doth not behave . . . unseemly" (v. 5)	Temperance

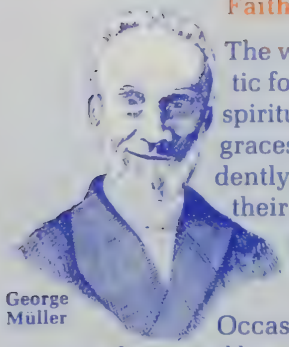
Grapevine

"And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard." *Gen. 9:20*

The grape is the first plant whose cultivation is specifically mentioned in Scripture. In Bible times, grapes were eaten as fresh fruit or dried for raisins, and their juice was made into wine and vinegar. In many portions of Scripture, the grapevine is a symbol for Israel and also of peace and prosperity.



Faith: A Gift and a Grace



George Müller

The word *faith* is the only characteristic found in both the listing of the nine spiritual gifts and the listing of the nine graces of the fruit of the Spirit. Evidently all Christians are to increase their faith, but there is also a special gift of faith given only to certain Christians.

Occasionally a young person will become frustrated by someone who is able to "trust God to supply his every need." Yet when he asks God for that same help nothing happens. Does that mean his faith is weak? Of course not. In fact, it may take more faith to keep trusting in God when there is no "evidence" of God's working. George Müller, a man who knew the power of prayer, determined never to ask man for anything, only to ask God. But he also admitted that his belief was not to be the pattern for others. God had given to George Müller a special gift, the gift of faith.

Apple

"The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth: the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered."
Joel 1:12

The Hebrew word for apple (*tappuah*) clearly comes from the Egyptian (*taph*). Ancient Egyptian papyri written not long after the Exodus declared that the fields of the Nile delta (where the Hebrews had dwelt) were full of fine plants—pomegranate, apple, olive, and fig trees. No wonder the Hebrews longed for their gardens in the land of Goshen!

LESSON 26

The Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (or the **unpardonable sin,** as it is sometimes called) is a doctrine that is only vaguely understood by most Christians. It is probably more misunderstood than any other teaching on the Holy Spirit.

A. The Scriptural account of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is found in Matthew 12:22–32, Mark 3:22–30, and Luke 12:10.

"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him.

"But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, . . . if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? . . . Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

"And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." *Matt. 12:22–32*

The following observations should be made:

1. Jesus Christ contrasted speaking against Himself with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Questioning the deity of Christ could be expected, since He purposefully veiled His deity throughout most of His ministry.

2. Jesus never stated that the Pharisees had just committed the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

B. The Scriptural ingredients of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

It would seem that two facts were present in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 that perhaps cannot be duplicated today:

1. A work was done (before many observers) by Christ on earth that was unmistakably supernatural.

2. A work that was clearly the work of Deity was insultingly ascribed to Satan.

The doctrine of an "unpardonable sin" should not be viewed lightly. Is it possible for such a sin to be committed today? Several Bible scholars believe that it is not. If they do believe such a sin is possible, they equate it with the rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior.

> "Sins against the Son of man may be forgiven because it was easily possible, by reason of His humble birth, lowly parentage, etc., to question the claims He put forth to deity. But when, after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, and presented to every man's conscience evidence sufficient to prove the truth of these claims, *the man who then refused to yield to Christ's claims* was guilty of resisting, insulting, and that amounts to blaspheming the testimony of the whole Godhead, of which the Spirit is the executive."
>
> —William Evans

A person who **fears** he has committed the unpardonable sin is clearly indicating that he has not.

A hard-hearted person would not care about the things of the Lord. He would not be concerned with the things of salvation. A spiritually soft-hearted person, on the other hand, either is saved or is close to salvation. He should be shown the love of God which passeth knowledge.

> "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out [illegible] because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not [illegible]de perfect [mature] in love." *1 John 4:18*

Even when it appears that God's longsuffering has exhausted itself, He is still patient.

> [illegible]ned to idols: let him alone." *Hos. 4:17*

Yet later God says,

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" *Hos. 11:8*

The sinner who repeatedly hears the gospel and knowingly and willingly rejects the Spirit's tugging at his conscience to accept Christ as Savior may in time reach the place that he not only rejects God's dealing in his life but also despises God's dealing to such an extent that he openly and defiantly speaks blasphemously against the Holy Spirit's dealing in his life.

C. The Scriptural contrast between the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and the "sin unto death"

Occasionally the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is confused with the sin unto death. The expression "sin unto death" is found in 1 John 5:16, "There is a sin unto death." This refers to a habitual life of sin that the **Christian** becomes involved in which ultimately leads to a premature death. The theme of Hebrews deals with this sin. At Kadesh-barnea the Jewish nation rejected God's offer of the Promised Land and committed the "sin unto death." As a result, all of the Israelites over 20 years of age (except Joshua and Caleb) eventually died in the wilderness. In the book of Hebrews we are warned not to follow in their footsteps since we have it so much **better than they did.**

"To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness. Take heed, **brethren,** lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." *Heb. 3:7–12*

Throughout the book of Hebrews the Christian is warned not to harden his heart against God's leading or God will take him home early. In Hebrews chapter 12 God gives the progression of His dealings with His children.

1. God exhorts His children to do right.

God uses parents, the Word of God, preachers, and Christian teachers to admonish His children to obey His commands.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children." *Heb. 12*

2. God chastises His children if they reject His exhortations.

God's second step is sending tribulation into the lives of His children. It may be in the form of sickness, financial reverses, animosity among friends, discouragement, failure in a class, or hundreds of other ways.

[illegible], despise [ignore] not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." *Heb. 12:5–6*

3. As a last resort, God will finally take His child home to heaven prematurely.

An event that would normally be accompanied by the blessings of God will instead be accompanied by the sorrow of God's judgment. The rewards that could be gained with additional life on earth will be forever lost. This is God's final step in working with His disobedient children who did not listen to the exhortation nor heed the chastisement of a holy God. They finally are guilty of sinning the "sin unto death."

"Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, **and live?**" *Heb. 12:9*

Suppose a father has a junior-age child who leaves for a week of summer camp that is approximately thirty miles away from home. The father warns him to be good as he boards the bus for a week away from home. But on the second night the father gets a phone call from his son's camp director indicating that his son has not been obeying. The father asks to speak to his son and "exhorts" him to "straighten up." But the next day he gets a second call with the same report. This time the father drives the thirty miles to the camp and administers some corrective measures. But the very next day the telephone call he receives reveals absolutely no change in the son's behavior. The son is called to the telephone in order to hear his father say, "All right, you've had your chance; I'm coming to get you and bring you home early."

Index

Page references for illustrations are printed in *italics*.

A

Aaron 107; **blessing** 136; **rod** 107
Abel 67
Abraham 4, 13, 52, 77, 107, 118, 126, 130, 140, 142, 182
Adam 118, 181, 182, 195, 203
Adams, John Quincy 59
Addison, Joseph 113
Africa 54, 55, 64, 70, 101, 144
"after their kind" 152, 156–157
Against Heretics 63
agnosticism 111
Alexander the Great 74
Allbrook, David 144
"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" 77
almond 107, *107*
alphabet 12, 13, 35, 52; **Hebrew alphabet** 12, 13, *13*
Alphaeus 210
"Amazing Grace" 54
Amos 60
Ananias and Sapphira 23, 227
Anderson, J. N. D. 212
Anderson, William F. 43
Andrew 210
angels 7, 26, 175, 189, 228
animal kingdom, design in the 105–106, 107
animals, in the Bible 25, 50, 61, 68, 70, 86, 107, 119, 127, 132, 142, 149, 152–156, 158, 188, 190, 196, 202, 224
Ankara 52
Annas 192
ant 50, *50*
The Ante-Nicene Fathers 64
anthropomorphism 124, 138
Apocrypha 61, 62, 71–73, 186–187
Apologeticus 208–209
Apollos 63
apostles 37, 58, 60, 63, 64, 69, 70, 188, 206, 210, 217; **martyrdom of** 210
apostolic benediction 136, 223
apple 244, *244*
Arabic 13
Aram 38
Aramaic 37, 38, *38*
archaeology, and the Bible 52–53
Artaxerxes I 62
Asaph 60
Assyrian Empire 38
atheism 100, 101
atmosphere, in the Bible 46, 47, 149, 150, 151
Augustine of Hippo 71
autographs, of the Bible 32

B

Babylonian Empire 38, 52, 67, 68, 115, 140
Babylonian Exile 38, 67, 68
Bach, Johann Sebastian 24
bagpipe 19, *19*
Balaam 25, 166
Barabbas 198
barley 161, *161*
Bartholomew 210
bat 61, *61*
Bateson, William 144
Bathsheba 233
Bedouin 107
bee 105–106, *105*
Beethoven, Ludwig van 24
behemoth 153–154
Belgic Confession of Faith 112
Belshazzar 52, 114
Bernard of Clairvaux 191
Bethany 219
Bethlehem 44, 184, 185, 234
Bezaleel 231
Bible, accuracy of 14, 25, 33, 44–53, 61, 70; **authority of** 27, 58; **authorship of** 1, 9–28, 29, 57; **autographs of** 32; **canonicity of** 57–77; **circulation of** 36–37; **common phrases from** 42; **difficulties with** 88–89; **divisions of** 1; **doctrine of** 6, 9–90; **in English** 39, 41, 42, 72, 223, 240–241; **inerrancy of** 50–51; **in modern languages** 39, 40, 41, 42, 72, 223, 240–241, 242; **inspiration of** 9–56, 61, 63, 71, 78, 230–231; **interpretation of** 81–89; **origin of** 1, 16, 65; **perspicuity of** 78; **power of** 53–56, 62; **preservation of** 32–43, 44, 62–63, 64, 73; **purpose of** 1; **study of** 2, 4, 5, 78–80; **symbolism of** 82–83; **translation of** 37, 38, 39, 40–41, 71, 72, 223, 240–241, 242; **uniqueness of** 1, 11, 16–17, 23, 29, 31
"The Bible Is—" 43
Bible societies 32, 36, 37
"The Bible Stands" 31
Bibliotheca Sacra 218
Biederwolf, William E. 165
"Billy Sunday and the Bible" 77
"Biochemistry and Man's Ancestors" 157
blood 48, 108, 125, 197–201, 222, 228; **of Christ** 125, 197–201, 222, 228
Boaz 161
Boettner, Loraine 15, 20, 21
Boghazkoy 52
Book of Mormon 31
"The Book Our Mothers Read" 17
Bradley, Henry 41
Bristol 56
British and Foreign Bible Society 32, 36
brontosaurus 154, *155*
Brooks, Phillips 179
Bruce, A. B. 208
Burma 120
Buschius, Herman 240

C

Caiaphas 192, 198
Calcutta 241
Caleb 247
Calov, Abraham 14
Calvary 44, 121, 128, 129, 140, 199, 222
Calvin, John 12, 14, 40
camel 107, *107*, 196
Canaan 134, 160 (*See also* **Israel; Palestine.**)
canonicity, of the Bible 57–77
capital punishment 44, 193, 194
Carey, William 120, 240, 241–242
Carroll, B. H. 15
cause and effect 102, 145
Central America 84
Ceylon 127
Chafer, Lewis Sperry 23
Chaldees 4, 13, 38, 52, 119
Chandler, Walter M. 195
chastisement, of believers 85, 247–248
cheetah 119

chief priests 192–193, 194, 207, 213, 214
Christ, ascension of 45, 213, 217, 218, 219–222; atonement of 181, 182; baptism of 136, 224; blood of 125, 197–201, 222, 228; burial of 45, 184, 191, 204, 214; comments on by famous people 167, 179, 183; as Creator 141, 174; death of 44–45, 64, 125–126, 128, 140, 168, 172, 182, 184, 191, 192–203, 204, 210, 216; deity of 4, 10, 57, 65, 126–127, 135, 140, 168–171, 172, 174–177, 179, 181–183, 184, 216, 220, 245; doctrine of 1, 6, 64, 167-222; exaltation of 175, 184, 216–222; example of 173, 182; genealogy of 178, 180–181; gospel of 74, 115, 119, 120, 168, 183, 206, 216; humanity of 124–125, 140, 166, 167, 168–171, 172–174, 179, 181–183; humiliation of 170, 172–174, 182, 184–191; incarnation of 57, 124–125, 140, 168, 179, 181–183, 184–185, 228, 234; intercession of 222; as Judge 174–175; love of 173, 182, 203, 246; as Mediator 128, 181–182, 222; miracles of 81, 89, 143, 177, 186–187; names and titles of 167–171, 172, 176, 202, 216, 222; offices of 169, 187, 189, 197, 200, 222; O.T. prophecies concerning and their N.T. fulfillments 44–45, 167–168, 178, 180–181, 189; parables of 88, 159; poverty of 184–185, 186, 188; power of 126–127, 143, 177, 186, 187, 204, 222; as Prophet, Priest, and King 169, 187, 189, 197, 200, 222; resurrection of 45, 170, 184, 204–215, 216–218, 219, 233; return of 4, 127, 168, 220, 222; as Savior 115, 118, 121, 140, 168, 170, 171, 182, 192, 197, 212, 229, 233, 246, 247; sinlessness of 181, 186, 187, 192; substitution of 129, 131, 181, 202; suffering of 197–203; supernaturalness of 178–183, 207; temptation of 182, 187; as theme of the Bible 167–168; transfiguration of 10; trial of 192–197; triumphal entry of 219; virgin birth of 44, 64, 77, 168, 176, 178–181, 184–185, 228, 234
Christianity 20, 32, 167, 205
Christianity Today 212
"Christ the Lord Is Risen To-day" 215
Christology 1, 6, 167–222
Church 1, 7, 39, 62, 64, *77*, 206, 210, 238, 239
Cicero 102, 104
clarinet 19, *19*
clay tablets 52
Clement of Rome 63
clouds, in the Bible 220
cock 196, *196*
Code of Hammurabi 52
College of Fort Williams 241
coney 70, *70*
Coniah, curse of 180–181
Constantine 32
Cooper, David L. 81
Coray, Henry W. 242
Cornelius 115
cornet 19
covenant 139, 152
Coverdale, Miles 41
creation 1, 21, 46, 51, 99, 117, 121, 122, 140, 141–158, 164, 230
Creation: The Facts of Life 157
crucifixion 44, 45, 46, 140, 192–203, 210
"The Crucifixion of Jesus" 197–201
cucumber 144, *144*
cults 4, 81, 85, 135, 167, 172
cuneiform 38, 52
Czech (language) 40

D

Dagon 49
Dalrymple, Sir David 64
Daniel 21, 38, 52, 60, 77, 114, 140
Danish Empire 120
Darius 115
Darwin, Charles 147
date 3, *3*, 5, *5*, 137, 244
David 19, 20, 23, 44, 60, 63, *77*, 152, 169, 180–181, 230, 232, 233
Davis, C. Truman 197–201
Dead Sea Scrolls 33, *73*
design 102–110, 117, 145, 157
devil 153, 182, 183, 189
devils 26, 183, 189
Diderot, Denis 72
dinosaurs 152–156, *155*
Diocletian 32
divided kingdom 68
Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom 162, 164, 165
DNA code 157
doctrines, Bible 1, 2, 4, 5, 6–7
dominion 150, 158
Domitian 210
Donaldson, James 64
donkey 25, *25*
dove 224, *224*
dragons 153, 156
dromedary 107, *107*, 196
dulcimer 19, *19*
Dutch (language) 241

E

earth 46, 47, 103, 104, 149–150, 220
Easter 212, 214
Easter lily 207, *207*
Egypt 36, 38, 52, 132, 134, 144, 244
elders 192–193
Elijah 77
Ellis, Franklin F. 121
Emmaus 212, 217
Engelder, Theodore 14, 15
England 54, 56, 64, 120
English, Bible 39, 41, 42, 72, 223, 240–241; language 11, 41, 42, 85, 138, 152, 223, 240–241
Enoch 77
eohippus 156–157
epistles 71, 77, 167, 206
"Eternal Father" 123
eternal life 25, 146, 168
eternity 117, 122, 123, 126, 176, 184, 203, 228, 231; of Christ 176; of God 122, 123, 126; of the Holy Spirit 228
Ethan 60
Europe 32, 139
Evans, William 100, 101, 246
evolution 143–148, 152, 154, 156–157
Evolution and Adaptation 145
eye, design of 110, *110*
Ezekiel 60
Ezra 37, 38, 60

F

faith 56, 99, 118–119, 125, 129, 135, 143, 144, 145, 146, 148, 237, 243, 244; in Christ 168, 182–183
falcon 68
Faraday, Michael 49
Ferguson, Adam 101
Fertile Crescent 119
Fields, Arthur N. 143
fig 3, *3*, 160, 244
firmament 113, 150
Firstfruits, feast of 234
Fisk, Samuel 162, 164, 165
fixity of species 156–157
Flood 51, 155–156
flute 19, *19*
Foreman, Kenneth J. 165
Fortress Antonia 198
fossils 143, 156
Franklin, Benjamin 73
free will 164–165
French, Academy of Science 48; language 40, 240, 241; Revolution 218
Fuller, Thomas 40
Funck-Brentano, Frantz 40

G

Galilee 220
Gamble, William B. 77
Ganse, Hervey D. 123
Gaussen, Louis 12, 14
genealogy, of Christ 178, 180–181
general revelation 112–118
Geneva Bible Society 32
Gentiles 87, 193
George Washington 48
German, Bible 40; language 40, 223
Germany 36, 139, 242
Gethsemane, Garden of 197, 219, 226
Gideon 231–232
Gideon Magazine 8
"The Gift of Languages" 240–242
Gill, John 15
Gish, Duane T. 144
"Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" 55
Glueck, Nelson 53
goats 142
God, attributes of 21, 99, 122–133; as Creator 1, 64, 99, 102, 108–109, 110, 112–113, 114, 116, 117, 121, 122, 140, 141–158, 164; doctrine of 1, 6, 99–166; existence of 99–111; faithfulness of 130, 139, 140, 152; Fatherhood of 64, 112, 115, 125, 126, 128, 129, 135, 136–137, 140, 141, 202, 204, 216, 222, 223, 227; fear of (reverence for) 128–129, 139, 170; glory of 77, 159, 161, 163; as Judge 129, 174–175; as King 2, 77, 112–113, 114–115, 169; knowledge of 2, 112–121; love of 122, 127, 130, 131, 203, 246; names of 135, 139–140, 141; nature of 134–138; "repentance" of 124, 166; revelation of 1, 61, 78, 99, 112–121, 146; righteousness of 127, 130–131; sovereignty of 134, 150, 159–166, 177, 229; theophanies of 135; Trinity of 134, 135–137, 141–142, 169, 223; universality of belief in 100, 101; will of 126, 138; works of 99, 141–158; wrath of 182
"God's Greatest Expression of Love" 203
God's Will and Ours 165
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 72
Golgotha 44, 121, 128, 129, 140, 199, 222
Gordon, A. J. 12, 21–22
Goshen, land of 244
gospel, of Christ 74, 115, 119, 120, 168, 183, 206, 216
Gospels 69, 70, 89, 167, 218
Gothard, Bill 197–201, 203
grape 3, *3*, 160, 243, *243*, 244
Great Commission 115
The Great Doctrines of the Bible 101, 246
The Greatest Book in the World 35–36
"The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived" 179
Greek (language) 9, 11–12, 23, 24, 26, 37, 38, 71, 74–76, 85, 99, 140, 168–169, 171, 223, 224, 227, 235, 240, 241; gender in 223, 227; verb system of 74–76, 234, 235
Greenleaf, Simon 209
Green, Michael 210
Greenslade, Stanley Lawrence 37
Grounds, Vernon C. 183
Guinness Book of World Records 37
Gutenberg, Johann 36

H

Habakkuk 60
Haggai 60
Halle, University of 56
Hammurabi, Code of 52
Handel, George Frederick 11
Hanson, George 213
Haran 13
hare 70
harriers 68
Harris, R. Laird 14, 15
Hastings, H. L. 43
hawk 68, *68*
heaven 21, 82, 111, 121, 146, 150, 184, 219, 220, 221, 222; the "three heavens" 150
Hebrew, alphabet 12, 13, *13*; history 68; language 12, 13, 19, 33, 34, 37, 38, 67, 68, 73, 74, 79, 85, 119, 132, 134, 135, 138, 139, 140, 141, 144, 168–169, 171, 240, 244; people (See Israelites.)
Heine, Heinrich 40
hell 21, 126, 146, 147, 203, 229
Hellenistic Age 74
Heman 60
hemathidrosis 198
Heribert-Nilsson, N. 145
Herod 211
Herschel, Sir William 49
high priest 192, 194, 195, 198
Hipparchus 47
Hiram 151
Hittite Empire 52
Hodder, Edwin 3
holiness 18, 122, 124, 127–133, 138, 143, 207, 222, 228, 234–236; of God 122, 124, 127–130, 138, 222, 228
Holl, Karl 40
Holmes, Peter 64
Holy Spirit, blasphemy against 245–248; as Comforter 221, 223, 224, 227, 228; as Creator 141, 230; deity of 135, 136–137, 223, 227–229; doctrine of 1, 6, 223–248; emblems of 221, 224, 232; fruit of 237–238, 243–244; fullness of 232–235; gifts of 229, 237–242; graces of 237–238, 243–244; indwelling of 232–236, 237; as Intercessor 224, 226; personality of 223–227; power of 221, 231–232; as Teacher 221, 224, 225, 226; work of 7, 78, 87, 118, 141, 179, 221, 224–225, 226–227, 230–236, 247
horse 132, *132*, 156
Hosea 60
How Can God Answer Prayer? 165
"How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds" 55
"How to Read the Bible" 80
Hoyle, Sir Fred 148
human body 47, 103, 108–109, *109*, 117, 239
Hume, David 101
Huss, John 40
Huxley, Sir Julian 147
Huxley, Thomas 147
Hyles, Jack 16, 235–236
hyrax 70, *70*

I

I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus 210
India 120, 127, 144, 190, 241–242
"In Evil Long I Took Delight" 55
Ingersoll, Robert 101
inspiration, of the Bible 1, 6, 9–56, 230–231
The Inspiration of the Scriptures 20, 21
Irenaeus 51, 63
Isaiah 18, 29, 60, 226, 231
Israel 3, 19, 76, 107, 151, 167, 195, 210, 243, 247
Israelites 13, 33, 34, 38, 44, 52, 62–63, 65, 67, 71, 87, 116, 134, 137, 139, 144, 160, 172, 186, 191, 192–193, 194, 196, 202, 208, 210, 244, 247

J

Jackson, Andrew 59
Jacob [illegible]
Jeconiah, curse of 180–181
Jeremiah 18, 19, 60, 77, 107
Jerome 46, 72

Jerusalem 45–46, 67, 73, 189, 198, 212, 219
"Jesus Loves Me" 242
Jews (See **Israelites.**)
Job 107, 153
Joel 60
John (the apostle) 16, 23, 60, 63, 64, 70, 77, 161, 170, 209, 210, 211, 218
John (the Baptist) 44, 64
Jonah 51, 60, 81, 167
Joseph 131
Joseph (of Arimathaea) 191, 211, 214
Joseph (husband of Mary) 172, 178, 180–181, 185, 186
Josephus, on the canon of the Old Testament 65–66; **on the destruction of Jerusalem** 45–46; **on the destruction of Sodom** 51; **on the preservation of the Old Testament** 62–63
Joshua 60, 171, 247
jot 12, 13, 34, 35
Judas Iscariot 190, 230
Jude 60, 77
Judson, Adoniram 120
Justin Martyr 63

K

Keith, Sir Arthur 147
Keller, Helen 56
Kennedy, D. James 111, 144, 145
Kenyon, Sir Frederick 33–35
Kepler, Johannes 49
Kerkut, G. A. 145
kestrels 68
Klopstock, Friedrich 40
Knighton, Henry 39
Knowing Scripture 83
Korah, descendants of 60
Koran 31

L

Ladd, George Eldon 210
Latin, Bible 36, 39, 71, 72, 240; **language** 39, 40, 71, 240, 241
Lazarus 204, 219
Lea, John 35–36
Lear, Tobias 48
Lebanon 151
Lee, Robert E. 56
legalism 235–236
leopard 119, *119*
leviathan 153, 154–155
Lewis, C. S. 183
liberalism 12, 14, 24, 50, 52, 146, 178, 207–214
"The Liberty of the Spirit" 235–236
life expectancy, before the Flood 155–156; **during the Millennium** 161
light 110, 117; **creation of** 142, 149
Lillenas, Haldor 31
lily 207, *207*
Lincoln, Abraham 59, 236
Linnaeus, Carolus 156
Livingstone, David 101
Lot 126
Lot's wife 51
Louis XVI 218
love, for God 2, 131, 235–236, 237, 243; **for others** 131, 203, 235–236, 237, 243; **of Christ** 173, 182, 203, 246; **of God** 122, 127, 130, 131, 203, 246
"Luckydipping" 83
Luke 23, 60, 77, 170, 197
luminaries, creation of 150–152; **moon** 102, 113, 150-152; **purpose of** 151–152; **stars** 47, 102, 103, 104, 150–152, 185; **sun** 102, 103, 113, 124, 150–152
lust 131, 187
Luther, Martin 40, 80

M

MacDonald, George 185
Machen, J. Gresham 14
M'Intosh, Hugh 15
Mainz 36
Malachi 60
man, body of 47, 103, 108–109, *109*, 117, 239; **creation of** 149, 157, 158, 230; **doctrine of** 1, 6; **fall of** 21, 181; **free will of** 164–165; **as image of God** 158, 230; **life of** 160; **lostness of** 147, 167, 181; **as male and female** 158; **personality of** 158
manna 79
Mark 23, 60, 77
marriage 51, 240
Martha 205, 219
Mary Magdalene 216
Mary (mother of Jesus) 64, 172, 178, 180–181, 185, 186
Mary (sister of Martha) 219
Masoretes 33, 34, 138
Matthew 23, 60, 77, 180, 210
Maury, Matthew 49
meditation 79
Mediterranean 50, 74, 188
Mesopotamia 144
Messiah 11
Meyer, F. B. 80
Micah 60
Michelangelo 24
Middle Ages 36, 39
Midianites 232
Millennium 155, 222
miracles, of Christ 81, 89, 143, 177, 186–187
Mishna 193
missionaries, William Carey 120, 241–242; **Adoniram Judson** 120; **George Müller** 55–56, 244
Moody, Dwight L. 87
moon 102, 113, 150–152
morality, sense of 116–117
Mordecai 60
Moriah 142
Morse, Samuel F. B. 49
Moses 13, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 30, 34, 36, 52, 53 57, 60, 118, 146, 168
"The Most Miserable Person" 229
Mueller, John Theodore 15
Müller, George 55–56, 244
musical instruments 19–20
muskmelon 144
mutations 157
"My Bible" 17

N

Naaman 51
Nabonidus 52
Nahum 60
Napoleon I 183
natural law 100, 117
nature, revelation of God in 1, 112, 116
Nazareth 169, 171, 186, 200
Nazarites 171
Nebuchadnezzar 19, 52, 114
Nehemiah 60, 139
New Testament 1, 37, 38, 57, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 80, 84, 115, 136, 140, 168, 177, 192, 196, 219, 235, 236, 240, 242; **books of** 60, 70; **canonicity of** 69–71 **chronology of** 71; **division of** 70; **language of** 74; **preservation of** 35–36, 37, 64; **prophecies fulfilled in** 44–46
Newton, John 54–55
Newton, Sir Isaac 49, 110
Nicodemus 191, 211
Nile River 36, 244
Nineveh 51
Noah 13, 77, 118, 152, 156, 224, 243

O

oak 76, *76*
Obadiah 60
oboe 19
ocean currents, in the Bible 49
oil 53, 103
Old Testament 1, 29, 57, 71, 73, 74, 79, 80, 84, 135, 139, 140, 167, 168, 170, 192, 195, 219, 220, 235, 236, 240, 242; **books of** 60, 66–67, 68; **canonicity of** 65–69 **chronology of** 68; **feasts of** 137, 189, 194; **languages of** 13, 38, 74; **Messianic prophecies of** 44–45; **preservation of** 33–35, 37, 62–63; **sacrifices of** 190; **translation of** 37, 38, 72
olive, oil 3, 221, 232; **tree** 3, *3*, 219, 221, *221*, 244

Olives, Mount of 219, 220
"On Universal Design" 110
The Origin of Species 147
Orr, James 218
"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" 191
Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts 33–35
owl 86, *86*
oxen 190

P

Packer, J. I. 15
Palestine 13, 38, 53, 68, 86, 137, 188, 212, 220 (*See also* Canaan; Israel.)
palm 3, *3*, 5, *5*, 137, 244
papermaking, invention of 36
papyrus 36, *36*; as writing material 36, 73, 244
parables, of Christ 88, 159
Parker, Gary E. 157
Passion Week 219
Passover, feast of 189
Patmos, isle of 218
Patterson, Colin 148
Patterson, Sinclair 167
Patton, Francis L. 100
Paul 2, 5, 18, 19, 20, 37, 54, 60, 62, 63, 64, 70, 71, 77, 119, 206, 210, 218
Pentateuch 34, 52
Pentecost, feast of 234
personality, elements of 138, 158; of God 138, 158; of the Holy Spirit 223–227; of man 158
Peter 2, 4, 10, 19, 20, 23, 60, 63, 77, 173, 216, 227; confession of Christ 169; death of 46, 64, 161, 210; denial of Christ 191, 192
Pharisees 207, 213, 214, 245
Philippi 63
Pickering, Wilbur N. 63
Pieper, Francis 14, 15
pigeons 224
Pilate 191, 192, 197, 198, 208, 209, 211, 213
Pinnock, Clark H. 15
plants, in the Bible 3, 5, 76, 107, 137, 144, 149, 150, 151, 160, 161, 207, 219, 221, 243, 244
pneumatology 1, 6, 223–248
Polycarp 63
polytheism 134
pomegranate 3, *3*, 160, *160*, 244
Praetorium 198
prayer 56, 80, 89, 90, 124; of Christ 174, 219; and Christ's intercession 222; and God's sovereignty 165; and the Holy Spirit's intercession 225; privilege of 165
Prescription Against Heretics 64
Preus, Robert 12
"Principles of Biblical Interpretation" 87
printing press, invention of 33, 36
prophets 58, 60, 64, 66, 67, 77
Ptolemy 47

Q

"Quenching the Holy Spirit" 233
Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur 41
Qumran 73

R

rabbit 70
Rahab 133
ram 142, *142*
ram's horn 19, *19*, 142
"Read Your Bible" 90
The Reason for Our Hope 183
Rehwinkel, Alfred M. 104, 105–106
Renaissance 139
repentance 51; of God 124, 166
resurrection, of all men 205; of Christ 45, 170, 184, 204–215, 216–218, 219, 233; of Christians 204, 205, 234
Rice, John R. 12
righteousness 127, 130–131
Roberts, Alexander 64
Roman Catholic Church 39, 71
Roman Empire 44, 45, 63, 64, 192, 193, 198, 208, 209
rooster 196, *196*
rose of Sharon 207
Rousseau, Jean Jacques 72
ruminants 70
Ruth 161

S

Sabbath 190, 194, 219
salvation 23, 25, 82, 85, 88, 114, 115, 117, 119, 129, 143, 146, 178, 246; doctrine of 1, 7; the Holy Spirit in 233–234; free will in 164; provision of in Christ 167, 168, 171, 182–183
Samson 171, 232
Samuel 169, 232
sanctification 18, 25, 122, 127–133, 143, 166, 234–236 (*See also* holiness; Holy Spirit.)
Sanhedrin 192–197, 198
Sanskrit 127
Satan 61, 153, 163, 168 (*See also* devil; devils.)
Saul 77, 233
Saunders, W. O. 111
scientific method 144
Scofield, C. I. 44
scribes 139, 192–193
Semites 13, 52
Serampore 120, 241
Shakespeare, William 24, 35–36
sheep 142, 202, *202*
Shem 13
"ships of Tarshish" 127
shofar 19, *19*, 142
Shrine of the Book Museum 73
Simon, martyrdom of 210
sin 21, 85, 128–129, 183; in the believer 125, 225, 226, 229, 233; confession of 125, 233; existence of 162–163; "sin unto death" 247–248; "unpardonable sin" 245–247
Sinai script 52
Smyrna 63
Sodom 51, 126, 130
Solomon 50, 60, 127, 132, 151, 168, 207
soulwinning 5, 84, 115, 182, 238
South America 84
sovereignty, of Christ 177; of God 134, 150, 159–166; of the Holy Spirit 228, 229
"The Spacious Firmament on High" 113
sparrow 188, *188*
special revelation 112, 118–121, 122
spider 106, *106*
Sproul, R. C. 83
Spurgeon, Charles Haddon 11, 12, 117–118
stars 102, 103, 104; in the Bible 47, 185; creation and purpose of 150–152; "star of Bethlehem" 185
Stephen 218
Straus, William L., Jr. 145
Strong, Augustus H. 124
sun 102, 113, 124; creation and purpose of 150–152; design of 103, 104
Sunday, Billy 77
The Sunday School Times 171
synagogue 33, 34
Syria 38
Syriac 37, 38

T

Tabernacle 142
Tabernacles, feast of 137, 232
Talmud 33, 34
Tamil 127
Temple 160, 173, 188, 196, 207, 208, 220
Tennyson, Alfred, Lord 41
Tertullian 64, 208–209
Thaddaeus 210
"That Holy Thing" 185
theistic evolution 146
theology proper 1, 6, 99–166
theophanies 135
thermonuclear energy 103

"They Died for the Truth" 210
Thiessen, Henry C. 164
"This Book Contains" 90
Thomas 170, 204, 210, 213, 216, 217
"Thus saith the Lord" 26, 29, 58
"Thy Word Is Like a Garden, Lord" 3
Tiberius 209
tides 47
Timothy 2
tittle 12, 13, 35
Titus 45
Torrey, R. A. 87
trees, in the Bible, almond tree 107, *107*; apple tree 244, *244*; date palm 3, *3* 5, *5*, 137, 244; evergreen cypress 151, *151*; fig tree 3, 160, 244; oak tree 76, *76*; olive tree 3, 219, 221, *221*, 244; willow tree 137, *137*
The Trial of Jesus from a Lawyer's Standpoint 195
trial, of Christ 192–197
Trinity, doctrine of 134, 135–137, 141–142
trumpet 19, *19*
"The Two Horsemen" 165
Tyndale, William 41, 240–241
tyrannosaurus *155*
Tyre 151

U

universe 122, 126, 127, 145, 162; creation of 46, 141–142; design of 102–105, 117; running down of 47; sovereignty of God over 159–160
"unpardonable sin" 245–247
"Untold Millions" 121
Ur 4, 13
Uzzah 23

V

Victoria 56
Vincent, Marvin R. 165
virgin birth 44, 64, 77, 168, 176, 178–181, 184–185, 228, 234
Voltaire 32
Vulgate 36, 71, 72

W

Warfield, Benjamin B. 12, 15, 35
"Warning to the Witness" 195
Washington, George, on the Bible 59; death of 48
Watson, D. M. S. 147
Watts, Isaac 199
Webster, Daniel 56
Wesley, Charles 215
Wesley, John 26
"What American Presidents Have Said about the Bible" 59
"What Great Scientists Have Said about the Bible" 49
"What Intellectuals Have Said about the Bible" 72
"What Outstanding Men and Women Have Said about the Bible" 56
wheat 161
"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" 199
white lily 207, *207*
Whitshott, Charles 53
Whittier, John Greenleaf 17
Why I Believe 111, 145
Wickramasinghe, Chandra 148
Wild, Laura H. 240–241
willow 137, *137*
Wilson, Robert Dick 35, 240, 242
Wilson, Woodrow 59
wind instruments 19–20
Winkler, Hugo 52
wisemen 185
witnessing 5, 84, 115, 182, 238
world system 116–117
Wycliffe, John 39–41, 240

Y

"Yet It Lives" 8
Young, Edward J. 14

Z

Zacharias 67
Zebedee 210
Zechariah 60, 83
Zephaniah 60

Index of Scripture References

Old Testament

Genesis
1 21
1:1 99, 135, 140, 141, 151
1:2 141, 230
1:3 142
1:3–5 149
1:6–8 150
1:9–13 150
1:14 151
1:14–19 150
1:20–23 152
1:21 152, 156
1:24–31 158
1:26 135, 230
1:26–27 158
1:28 150
1:31 144
2:1–2 158
2:2 145
2:7–25 158
3:15 138, 168, 172
4:2, 4 202
4:8 67
4:20 190
6:3 227
6:6 124
8:8 224
8:22 152
9:20 243
11:7 135
12 53
15:6 138
17:1 140
18:25 126, 129, 130
19:22 126
20:6 163
22:8 167
22:11–12 135
22:13 142
47:17 132

Exodus
2:3 36, 53
3:1–15 135
3:7 138
3:14 138, 139, 183
6:6–8 138
15:11 128
20:7 139
20:9–11 149
20:11 145
21:32 190
25:1 30
26:14 142
29:1–7 169
31:2–3 231
33:2 52
5:30–34 231

Leviticus
11:5–6 70
11:13 86
11:16–17 86
12:7–8 186
17:11 47, 48
21:10 195
23:40 137

Numbers
6:24–26 136
10 19
11:5 144
13:23 160
17 107
22:12, 20 166
22:28 25
23:19 124, 133
24:17 167

Deuteronomy
5:11 139
5:29 166
6:4 134
7:1 52
8:7–8 3
12:32 30
14:7 70
14:12, 18 61
18:15 167
18:21–22 50
19:18–19 195
20:17 52
25:4 37, 190
28 116
29:29 166
32:33 153, 156

Joshua
1:8 79
2:4 133
3:10 52
21:45 133
24:11 52

Judges
5:20 47
6:13–15 231
6:34 231
9:9 221
13 171
13:25 232
14:6, 19 232
15:14 232
16:31 232

Ruth
2:17 161

1 Samuel
15:1–35 240
15:11, 35 124
16:11 202
16:13 169, 232
16:14 233

2 Samuel
15:30 219
23:2 11, 19, 29

1 Kings
7:19, 22 207
8:27 123, 137
8:56 133
9:11 151
10:28 132
11:9 138

2 Kings
11:7 219
23:13 219

1 Chronicles
3:16–19 180

2 Chronicles
9:21 127
24:21 67

Ezra
1:1 29
4:7 38
4:8–6:18 38
7:12–26 38

Nehemiah
2:13 153, 156
8:1–8 37, 38
9:7–8 130

Job
1:3 107
1:12 163
2:6 163
12:10 161
12:23 160
22:12 47
26:7 46
26:10 47
26:13 228, 230
28:25 47
33:4 230
38:1–4 145
38:4–6 159
38:13–14 46
39:26 68
40 154
40:15–24 153–154
41 154
41:19–32 154–155

Psalms
8:1–3 116
8:3–4 105
8:3–5 121
8:8 49
14:1 85, 100, 121, 126
16:10 45
19:1 103, 112

Psalms
22 44
22:1 44, 202, 203
22:1–3 128
22:2 45
22:6–8 45
22:13 201
22:16 45
22:16–17 201
22:18 45
22:28 160
23:1 138
24:3–10 45
27:1 126
33:6 126, 149
33:9 126, 149
34:20 45
38:12 79
45:4 173
51:10 143
51:11–13 232
51:17 143
68:11 9
69:21 45
69:25 230
76:10 163, 192
78:41 162
83:18 134
84:3 188
86:10 134
90:2 123
91:13 153
92:12, 14 5
102:24–27 124
102:25–26 47
103:14 47
103:17 123
104:15 3
104:18 70
104:20 150
104:21 160
104:30 230
110:1 45, 230
115:3 161
118:22–23 57
119:9 53, 80
119:11 182
119:89 16
119:152 16
119:160 16
135:7 46
139:2 124
139:7–10 228
139:7–12 123, 125
139:14–17 109
145:9 133
147:5 123
147:18 159
148:5 149
148:11 126

1:7 121
6:6–8 50
6:16 138
14:34 116
24:2 79
30:5 15
30:5–6 30
30:26 70

Song of Solomon
2:1 207

Isaiah
1:2 30
1:18 138
6:3 136
6:8 135
6:8–11 140
6:9–10 231
7:14 44, 140, 171, 178
8:8–10 140
8:19–20 29
9:6 171, 178
14:13–14 140
38:17 125
40:3 44
40:8 1, 32
40:13 229
40:22 46
40:26 124
43:10–11 134

Isaiah
44:6, 8 134
45:5–6 134
45:7 150
45:18 134
46:9–10 124
46:9–11 161
46:10 124
48:11 162
49:1 18
50:6 201
53:7 173, 202
53:9 45
55:8–9 23, 88, 117, 123
55:11 4, 32
57:15 122, 123
59:16 171
59:21 32
61:1 169
61:1–2 57–58
65:20 156
66:1 137

Jeremiah
1:1–2 30
1:4–5 18
1:11–12 107
10:10–16 138
10:11 38
13:23 119
15:16 2

Jeremiah
18:8 166
22:24–30 180
23:24 150
23:29 53
31:34 125
33:20–21 152
33:22 47

Daniel
2:4–7:28 38
3:4–5 19
4:17 114
4:25 114, 160
4:34–35 114
4:35 161
5:16 52
5:21, 23 114
5:29 52
6:26 115
7:15–16 20, 27
8:27 27
9:2–6 20
9:16 130
12:8–9 21, 27

Hosea
4:17 246
6:2 45
11:8 247
12:6 129
14:5 207

Joel
1:12 244
2:25 163

Amos
2:9 76

Jonah
1:17 160
3:4–10 124
4:6–7 160

Micah
5:2 44, 184
6:8 128, 129–130, 132
7:18 132

Nahum
1:7 133

Habakkuk
1:8 119

Haggai
2:7 171

Zechariah
9:9 83, 189
9:9–10 44
12:10 44
14:4 219, 220

Malachi
3:6 124

New Testament

Matthew
1 178
1:1–17 180
1:16 178
1:18 172
1:20 44, 176
1:21 171
1:23 140, 171, 184
2:2 151
2:6 171
2:11 172
2:23 171
3:1–4:1 189
3:16–17 136, 224
4 182
4:1–7 187
4:2 172
4:4 15, 30, 69
4:10 69
4:12–14:12 189
5:6 130
5:17–18 69
5:17–44 235
5:18 12, 13, 32, 51
5:21–43 69
5:39 182
5:43–44 131
5:45 133, 160
6:26 160
6:29 69
6:30 160
8:4, 11 69
8:20 188

Matthew
8:27 177
8:44 172
9:1–8 174
9:13 69
9:15 171
10:15 69
10:19 84
10:29 188
11:10 69
11:28–30 173
12 246
12:3–8 69
12:22–32 245
12:31 226
12:40 51, 167
12:40–42 69
12:41 51
12:42 168
13:13–15 88
13:14–15 69
13:54–55 174
13:55 172, 186
14:13–20:34 189
15:1–9 69
15:8 240
16:4 69
16:16 168, 169
16:17 78
16:21 206
17:9 206
17:11 69
17:22–23 206
18:20 176
19:3–9 51, 69
19:18–19 69

Matthew
20 159
20:17–19 206
21:6–7 189
21:13–16 69
21:42 57, 69
22:28–34 69
22:36–40 69
22:37 243
22:44–45 69
23:1–3 69
23:10 140
23:23, 35 69
23:37 164
24:2 45
24:15–16 69
24:24, 31 69
24:35 32, 41
26:14–15 190
26:32 206
26:52–53 173
26:53–56 69
26:56 190
27:26–56 190
27:28–30 201
27:34, 35 45
27:39–43 45
27:45 45
27:46 38, 44, 69, 128
27:48 45, 186
27:57–60 45, 214
27:57–61 191
27:62–66 208, 212, 214

Matthew
28:9 204, 213
28:9–10 216
28:11–15 207
28:16–20 217
28:19 136, 227
28:19–20 223
28:20 176

Mark
1:2–13 189
1:4–6:29 189
1:27 177
1:35 174
1:44 69
2:5–10 177
2:24–28 69
3 246
3:22–30 245
5:41 38
6:3 174
6:11 69
6:30–10:52 189
7:6–12 69
7:31–37 143
7:34 38
9:11–13 69
10:2–12 69
10:19 69
11:17 69
12:10 69
12:24–31 69
12:29 134
12:35–37 69
12:36 230

Mark

13:14 69
14:21, 27 69
14:34 172
14:49 69
14:53 192
14:58 196
14:63 195
14:63–64 197
15:7–41 190
15:10 194
15:27–28 201
15:34 69, 125–126
15:42–47 191
15:44–45 211
15:47 214
15:56–59 194
16:1–3 214
16:9 216

Luke

1:1–4 23
1:30–35 44
1:35 179
1:35–37 228
2:4–7 44
2:16 184
2:22, 24 186
2:40 173
2:51 186
2:52 125, 173, 174
3:1–4:13 189
3:19–9:9 189
3:23–38 180
4:4, 8, 69
4:12 69
4:16–21 57–58
4:16–27 69
4:27 51
5:5 4
5:14 69
6:3–5 69
6:8 177
6:46 140, 170
7:26–27 69
9:10–19:28 189
9:27–36 176
10:3–4 84
10:7 37
10:26–27 69
10:38–42 188
11:2 140
11:15 189
11:29–32 69
11:51 67, 69
12:10 245
12:20 161
13:28 69
16:17 32
16:24 126
16:29–31 69
16:31 30
17:26–27 51
17:26–31 69
17:28–29 51
17:32 51
18:20, 31 69
19:41–48 173
19:46 69
20:17 69
20:37–39 69
20:41–44 69
21:25 152

Luke

22:11–12 189
22:22 166
22:37 69
22:44 172, 197
22:54–62 192
22:66 192
22:70–71 169
23:1–2 197
23:13–49 190
23:38 38
23:46 69, 200, 202
23:52–53 211
24:1–7 45
24:13–18 212
24:13–31 214
24:13–33 216
24:19 169
24:21 210
24:25–32 69
24:31–39 213
24:32 79
24:33–36 212
24:34 216
24:34–39 204
24:36–37 210
24:36–43 217
24:41–43 204
24:44 62, 65
24:44–47 69

John

1:1 141, 170, 171, 176
1:1–3 174
1:3 141
1:6–8 44
1:9–2:12 189
1:11 188
1:12 140
1:14 179
1:18 138
1:19–23 44
1:41 168
1:46 186
1:48 177
1:51 69
2:1–11 143
2:11 186
2:13–4:54 189
2:19, 21 196
2:22 206
2:24–25 177
3:2 177
3:14 51, 69, 168
3:16 131, 171
3:20 147
4 182
4:6 172
4:6–15 187
4:9 172
4:24 137
4:25 168
5:1 189
5:1–9 143
5:17 174
5:23 175
5:26–27 170
5:28–29 205
5:36 174
5:39 69
5:45–47 69, 146
5:46–47 30
6:1–4 187

John

6:4 189
6:5–14 143
6:5–11:57 189
6:21 176
6:26–27 177
6:32, 45 69
7:19–23 69
7:37–39 69
8:24 182, 183
8:39–40 69
8:42 176
8:44 69
8:56–58 69
8:58–59 182–183
9:33 177
10:9 82
10:11 171
10:17–18 204
10:33–36 69
11:25 171, 205
11:25–26 205–206
11:55 189
12:12–19 44
13:13 140
13:14–15 173
13:18 69
13:21 172
13:26 69
14:6 133, 171
14:13–14 175
14:15 2, 131
14:16 227
14:16–17 136
14:19 206
14:21, 23 2
14:24 2
14:26 69, 224, 225, 226, 228
15:1–16 171
15:10 2
15:12–13 182
15:13 131, 173, 203
15:14 2
15:15 22
15:26 224, 225
16:7 221
16:13 58, 69, 78, 221, 224
17:8 22
17:12 69
17:17 27, 54, 69, 80, 133
18:24, 28 192
18:25 191
18:28–31 192
19:1–37 190
19:17 38
19:19 171
19:28 69, 172, 200
19:30 202
19:31–37 211
19:31–42 191
19:34 44
19:36 45
19:38–40 172
19:38–42 191
19:39–40 211
20:1–8 209
20:14–15 172

John

20:15 214
20:19–24 217
20:19–31 212
20:21 214
20:22 233
20:24–29 45
20:25–28 204
20:25–29 212
20:26–29 217
20:28 140, 170, 216
20:30–31 69, 177
21:1–23 217
21:4–5 172
21:18–19 46
21:19, 22 161

Acts

1:3 219
1:3–12 217
1:8–11 45
1:11 220
1:12 219
1:16 11, 29, 226
1:16–20 230
2:20 152
2:22 171, 177
2:23 168, 192
2:24, 32 206
3:15 171, 206
3:26 206
4:10 206
4:11 168
4:12 171
5:3 226
5:3–4 137, 227
5:31 171
7:45 171
7:55 218, 225
8:29 226
9:3–6 218
10:25–26 175
10:40 206
12:1–2 211
13:4 226
13:30–37 206
14:15–17 112–113, 116
17:28 126
17:31 206
28:25 226
28:25–27 231

Romans

1:7 136
1:16 54
1:19–25 116
1:20 112, 113, 115, 117
1:21 120, 163
1:24 163
2:14–15 116
3:4 27
4:24 206
5:1–2 128
5:12 182
6:4, 9 206
6:23 203
7:4 206
7:13 128
8:2 227
8:11 206
8:14 226
8:15 38
8:22–23 234

Romans
8:26 223, 226
8:26–28 225
8:32 131
9:5 136–137
10:9 206
10:13–15 119
10:14 120
10:17 118, 120
11:23 124
11:33–36 88
15:30 226

1 Corinthians
2:10 228
2:10–13 225
2:12 5
2:13 10, 11, 26, 69
2:14 78, 118, 146
3:4–10 63
3:11–17 25
3:16 234
6:14 206
6:19 234
8:4 135
9:1 218
9:5 188
9:9 190
10:13 163
12:4–11 237
12:5 239
12:7 238
12:11 225, 229, 238, 239
12:12–27 239
12:13 234
12:18 238
12:20 239
12:22–25 239
13 243
13:1–8 182
13:4–13 243
15:1–4 206
15:4 206, 210
15:3–8 213
15:6–7 217
15:8 218
15:12–19 205
15:20 205, 206
15:22 206
15:41 47
15:45 181
15:53 234
15:54 204
16:22 38

2 Corinthians
2:17 86
3:6 235
3:17 235, 236
3:18 227
4:2 86, 87
4:3–4 147
4:4 120
4:14 206
5:17 143
6:14 240
8:9 185
12:2 150
13:14 136, 223

Galatians
1:1 206
1:11–12 10
1:15–16 18
3:16 12
4:4 172, 234
4:6 38
5:22–23 237, 243

Ephesians
1:6–7 132
1:9–11 162
1:18 5
1:20 206
2:7–9 132
3:19 246
4:6 122
4:26 63
4:30 226, 234
4:31 226
5:18 234, 235
5:26 80

Philippians
1:6 127
2:5–7 179
2:5–8 182, 184
2:8 174
2:9–11 175, 216, 222
3:10 2
4:3 63

Colossians
1:15 137
1:16 141, 174
1:17 123, 126
2:9–10 233
2:12 206

1 Thessalonians
1:10 206
4:1–3 166
5:19 226, 233

2 Thessalonians
1:8–9 203
1:9 126
2:8 222

1 Timothy
1:12–15 54
1:17 137
2:5 135, 171, 222
4:13 2
4:15 2, 4
4:15–16 20
4:16 2
5:18 37, 190

2 Timothy
2:8 206
2:15 2, 4, 81, 87
2:24–25 173
3:14–15 2, 62
3:16 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 24, 26, 28, 29
3:17 2, 4
4:1 174–175
4:3–4 147
4:8 130

Titus
2:11 132
2:13 170

Hebrews
1:1 10
1:1–2 174
1:1–3 99
1:8 137, 170, 176
1:12 177
2:3–4 177
2:6–8 189
2:9 202
3:4 103
3:7–12 247
4:12 5, 54
4:14 169, 181
4:15 170, 181, 187
5:8 125, 174
5:10 171
7:24 177
7:25 222
7:26 181
9:14 228
10:5 179
10:29 226
11:1 145
11:3 46, 142, 143, 149
11:6 117
11:8 4
11:25 229
11:31 133
11:32 232
12:2 182, 201
12:3 203
12:5 247
12:5–6 248
12:9 248
13:5 125
13:8 176, 177
13:20–21 171

James
1:5 89
1:13 128, 162
1:14 187
1:17 124
2:19 100
2:25 133
5:16 130

1 Peter
1:10–11 22
1:10–12 27
1:15–16 128
1:16 127, 129
1:25 16
2:2 54
2:6 171
2:21–24 181
2:24 203
2:25 171
3:15 4
5:4 171

2 Peter
1:16–21 10
1:21 18, 29, 231
3:7–13 127
3:9 164
3:15–16 62
3:15–18 20
3:16 81
3:18 2

1 John
1:1–3 22
1:5 149
1:10 85
2:1 222
2:2 182
3:2 122, 128
4:1–6 4
4:7 128
4:18 246
4:20–21 131
5:2–3 2
5:6 228
5:13–14 126
5:16 247
5:18 85

2 John
6 2

Revelation
1:5 171
1:7 220
1:8 74, 171, 176
1:16, 20 82
5:6, 8 171
5:12 168, 222
5:13 216
6:8 82
9:11 38
13:3 82
13:8 168
15:2 82
15:4 128
16:16 38
19:11 171
19:13–15 175
19:16 169, 171
20:1–2 153
20:4, 6 222
21:3 140, 184
22:8–9 175
22:13 74
22:16 171
22:18 30

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